

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

The Udana Seminar 1975

Introduction

DAY ONE

Sangharakshita: Before we begin the actual text, let me say a few general words about the body of literature of which this particular text is a part. As I expect most of you know, this work, the Udana, is part of the Pali Canon, which has been handed down in the Theravada school. I don't know how familiar you are with the history of Buddhist literature or how the Canon was formed and developed, but perhaps I should say a few words about that first and then give a brief summary of the Pali Canon and indicate the place of the Udana in that Canon.

To begin with, as probably everybody does know, the Buddha taught simply orally. The Buddha didn't write anything. His immediate disciples didn't write anything. The teaching - the Dharma - was an oral tradition for four or five hundred years. It is important that we should remember that, because when we read through some of the Buddhist Scriptures, especially parts of the Pali Canon, sometimes they have a rather unattractive literary form. But this is because they are not literature. They were not written. They are records of oral tradition and, since the Dharma had to be handed down by oral means, the oral tradition was given a form which made it easy to remember - for instance, lists: one of this, two of these, three of those, and so on; and lists of lists. This made the teaching easy to remember. But, when it was written down eventually in that orally transmitted form, it did not always make very attractive or readable literature. Very often it did not add up to literature at all.

That was the position for some hundreds of years: the Dharma was handed down entirely by oral means, and the oral tradition used to be preserved by numbers of full-timers, who by that time were called bhikkhus or even monks, getting together periodically and reciting together what they remembered, so that you would add what you had learned orally to the pool. You would hear other people reciting and you would join in, and eventually there would be a number of monks - dozens, even hundreds of monks - all reciting, all chanting, the oral tradition. These collective chants, which were known as samgiti - usually the word is translated as council, but it means a collective chanting of the oral tradition by the bhikkhus - became the basis for the literary Canon.

Meanwhile, of course, different schools and different traditions had developed and the chantings had been going on in several different languages, because the Buddha had permitted that, not to say encouraged it. So, as the Dharma spread from its original home in north-eastern India all over northern India then down into the south, dialectal differences started developing, so that the monks of eastern, western and southern India, for example, were chanting together the same tradition and substantially the same material, but with differences of accent, pronunciation and grammar, and then even differences of dialect crept in. In that way, there were even a number of different oral traditions, and this was reflected in the Canon when it came to be written down. Eventually there were recensions of the literary version of the Canon in several different languages: mainly in Sanskrit, which was the Canon of the Sarvastivadins; what afterwards came to be known as Pali, which was the Canon of the Theravadins; and also chantings and recensions in Apabramsa and in Paisaci - mainly those four. But only one of all those has survived in the original language in its entirety and that is

the Pali recension, handed down in the Theravada school. We have quite a bit of [2] the Sanskrit recension of the Sarvastivadins in the original and a lot more in translation, but we have nothing, to the best of my recollection, of the Paisaci or the Apabramsa original traditions, though there is something in Chinese translation.

So the Pali Canon is important as the only surviving complete recension of the Canon - the pre-Mahayanistic Canon - in the language in which it was originally handed down, though that is not to say that it was the language of the Buddha. It is dialectally somewhat different from that. Sometimes over-enthusiastic Theravadins will claim that, in the Pali Canon, you have the actual words of the Buddha, just as though they had been taken down in shorthand or as though there was a tape recorder under the Bodhi-tree. But it isn't really like that. I am not going to go into the details of the exact dialectal development; this is a matter of some dispute among scholars, anyway, but it is broadly agreed that the Pali Canon is based upon a recension of the Dharma that was circulating in north-western India about the time of Asoka. We can't really say that it is the language of the Buddha and the teaching exactly as he gave it.

The Pali Canon exists in three great collections called Pitakas - the Three Baskets: the Vinaya Pitaka, the Sutta Pitaka and the Abhidhamma Pitaka. The Vinaya Pitaka is generally said to be the Pitaka or collection of monastic rules. This is only partly correct. It contains a lot of other material, too, about the history of the Sangha, about the Dharma, about the life of the Buddha and, incidentally, also, the rules for the monks are laid down by the Buddha, and often the occasion or incident leading to the laying down of those rules is described. There are five bulky volumes in Miss Horner's English translation of the Vinaya Pitaka.

Then you have the Sutta Pitaka, which is the most important of the Pitakas. This consists of five Nikayas or divisions. First of all, there is the Digha-Nikaya, which is a collection of long - Digha means long - discourses by, or attributed to, the Buddha. There are thirty-two of these. They are very important and ancient, or reflect ancient traditions, though they are not all equally ancient. Then you have the Majjhima-Nikaya, the collection of approximately 150 medium-length discourses. Many of these are also quite ancient. After that, there is the Samyutta-Nikaya, which is a collection of a very large number of short sayings or discourses, arranged subject-wise. Samyutta means simply a collection. In this particular Nikaya, the sayings and short discourses of the Buddha are collected together according to subject matter. There is a series of little talks or verses and so on, on trees, another on Stream Entry, another on the gods, another on Sariputra, another on the fetters, and so on. This Nikaya has some material original to itself and some which is also found in the two preceding Nikayas, that is to say the Digha and the Majjhima.

Then there is the Anguttara-Nikaya. Anga-uttara is quite difficult to translate. Anga is limb or factor; uttara is one higher. So it's going one higher each time, from one to two, from two to three, from three to four. In the first section you've got all the ones: for instance, food, the one support. In the next section, there are all the twos - name and form, and so on. Then, in the next, all the threes - the Three Jewels, and so on. It goes, as far as I recollect, up to eleven. So that's the Anguttara-Nikaya. This also duplicates some of the material in other Nikayas.

Lastly, you have the Khuddhaka-Nikaya, which means miscellaneous. That is a real rag-bag. It contains some of the most ancient material in the whole Pali Canon, like the Sutta-Nipata, and it also contains some [3] of the latest. It contains the Jataka books. It contains, even, quasi-Abhidhamma works like the Patisambhida-magga. So it is a very miscellaneous

collection indeed - fourteen different works, including also the Dhammapada. And our Udana is found there. We'll come back to that in a minute.

So those are the five Nikayas or divisions which make up the Sutta-Pitaka, the collection of discourses.

Then we have the Abhidhamma-Pitaka, which is very much later than the other two Pitakas, divided into seven books. The first and the last of the seven books are the most important. The first is the Dhammasangani, enumeration of phenomena. I am not going into that now. The last is the Patthana or the book of relations. Those are, as I said, the most important of the seven, but the material in between is quite interesting and important, too. All the seven books are somewhat later than the Sutta and Vinaya Pitakas.

So here we have the existing Pali Canon. It is important, because it is a collection of Buddhist traditions coming down to us in an early Indian language which we now know as Pali. In addition to information about the Buddha and his teaching and his Order, there is a lot of miscellaneous information about the condition of India in those days - political, economic, social; information about anthropology and sociology and information about manners and customs, arts and crafts; so we get a rich and vivid picture of the life of ancient India in those days, about 500 BC, and against this vivid background we see the life of the Buddha unfolding, his teaching being given and his movement developing.

So, even from a human, historical and literary point of view, the literature, as it is now represented by the Pali Canon is very important. It is our most important source of information about India in those days. There is nothing like it in the whole range of Indian literature. Sanskrit literature, on the whole, apart from the Vedic and Upanishad literature, is very much later and we don't get such a vivid picture of the life of ordinary people as we get from the Pali Canon. That is why most of the accounts that are being written nowadays about ancient India, that is to say India around the time of the Buddha, draw heavily upon the Pali Canon for their information. If you want to know what sort of pottery they had, we can find out from the Pali Canon, what sort of amusements, what sort of dress, what sort of deities they worshipped, what were the trends of thought in those days apart from the Buddha's own - all that information is in the Pali Canon. Even what sort of shoes they wore - there is a whole list of them in the Pali Canon. You don't get that sort of information anywhere else in Indian literature for that period. So, even historically, this literature is very important. It is from this literature that the Udana comes and, as I mentioned, it is from the Khuddhaka-Nikaya.

The Udana is one of the most ancient books in the Khuddhaka-Nikaya. It is one of the most ancient parts of the whole Canon. Possibly only parts of the Sutta-Nipata are older than some of the parts of the Udana. We cannot even say that the Sutta-Nipata as a book is older than the Udana as a book, but each contains different strata. In the Sutta-Nipata there are older and there are more recent strata and similarly in the Udana. But we can say that, probably, in the Pali Canon only parts of the Sutta-Nipata are older than the oldest parts of the Udana.

In the Udana, the main line of division is between the verse portions and the prose portions. You will notice, as we go through, that there is a prose portion followed by a verse portion in each section, and the [4] prose portion purports to relate the circumstances under which the verse was delivered by the Buddha. But you will notice something quite strange as we go along: often, the prose and the verse do not fit. Sometimes the verse seems quite

inconsequential and sometimes the prose passage seems to have little or no connection with the verse, or the verse with the prose. It is as though they had been put together later. Sometimes they do fit, but not very often. There is also, in the original Pali, a slight difference of language. The language of the verses is somewhat more archaic than the language of the prose portions. So we can say, very broadly speaking, that the verses in the Udana belong to an older stratum of tradition than do the prose portions, though most of even the prose portions are quite early. So, in the verses of the Udana, as with some portions of the Sutta-Nipata, we come very near indeed to the original beginnings of Buddhism.

What does this word udana mean? This also is very important. Udana means a breathing out, a forcible expiration. This ties up with a general Indian Hindu and Buddhist tradition about the five breaths, the five pranas. According to this tradition, in each human being there are five different kinds of breath governing different physiological functions. For instance, there is a downward-going breath, by which we can expel waste matter from the system. Then there is the in and outgoing breath, which is the breath that keeps us alive. In this way there are five different kinds of breath or five different breathings, and udana is the outward-going breath. So an udana in this Buddhistic sense, is something which is breathed out, something which is expired - especially a saying, or even an exclamation, which is as it were forced from us by great emotional and spiritual pressure, when we feel very stirred or moved by something, or even, as we say in English, inspired - only here it is expired and therefore we speak something out of the fullness of our feeling and our emotion or our spiritual realization. That is called an udana.

So, strictly speaking, the udanas here are simply the verses. The verses here represent the Buddha's utterance at certain crucial moments when he was very deeply moved, spiritually stirred, and he spoke rhythmically in verse. So the udanas, strictly speaking, are simply these verses, not the prose parts; but the prose parts have become connected with them in the course of time and sometimes throw light on them, but not often. We may even notice as we go along - we certainly did last time (I did a seminar on the Udana) - that the spirit of the verses seems a little different from the spirit of the prose portions. The verses are not only more archaic in diction but they are, in a way, simpler; they seem to reflect the very early, undeveloped stage of Buddhism, perhaps the Buddhism of the Buddha himself, so far as we can see. We shall probably notice something of all this as we go through in any case, so there is no need to insist upon it too much.

Before we actually start, does anyone want to ask any questions on all that?

ABC: Yes, what was the fifth book of the sutta you mentioned?

S: The Khuddhaka. It means miscellaneous. That is the collection which contains the Dhammapada, the Jatakas, the Bodhi (?), the Patisambhida-magga, the Sutta-Nipata and, of course, the Udana and also the (?). It is quite a miscellaneous collection. Literally, Khuddhaka means little [5] - the little collection - but it has swollen in the course of time. It is generally rendered, therefore, 'The Miscellaneous Collection'. It is the biggest of all the Nikayas in quantity.

Altogether, in the Royal Thai edition, this Pali literature comprises 45 volumes of about 500 pages each. It is a quite substantial literature. It is practically all in English. There are only one or two books where there is some Pitaka that has not been translated.

"Honour to that Exalted One, Arahant, rightly awakened.

Chapter I. Enlightenment. i

Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Uruvela, on the bank of the river Neranjara at the foot of the bodhi-tree, having just won the highest wisdom.

Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated for seven days in one posture and experienced the bliss of release. Then the Exalted One, after the lapse of those seven days, during the first watch of the night, rousing himself from that concentration of mind, gave close attention to causal uprising in direct order, thus: This being, that becomes; by the arising of this, that arises, namely: Conditioned by ignorance, activities; conditioned by activities, consciousness; conditioned by consciousness, mind-and-body; conditioned by mind-and-body, the six sense-spheres; conditioned by the six sense-spheres, contact; conditioned by contact, feeling; conditioned by feeling, craving; conditioned by craving, grasping; conditioned by grasping, becoming; conditioned by becoming, birth; conditioned by birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair come into being. Thus is the arising of this mass of Ill.

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin, His doubts all vanish, since he knows thing-with-its-cause."

S: There are several points to remark on here. Let us start at the beginning. 'Thus have I heard' - Evam me suttam - this is the phrase with which all suttas, all discourses of the Buddha, begin, or rather the introduction begins. Does anyone have any idea who is supposed to be speaking here?

: Ananda.

S: Ananda, because Ananda was supposed to have recited the Sutta-Pitaka, [6] according to some accounts, or all the Pitakas according to another account, at the so-called First Council, that is the first chanting together of the oral traditions after the Buddha's decease. Ananda is the sort of archetypal hearer. He is the one who hears, the one who has received the tradition and who passes it on, saying 'Thus have I heard'.

'On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Uruvela, on the bank of the river Neranjara at the foot of the bodhi-tree, having just won the highest wisdom.'

This is quite interesting in a way, inasmuch as you are given, right at the beginning, the precise historical location. You are locating the Buddha at a certain place in north-eastern India, at a certain period, a certain time, a certain moment, even, in his life - just after he attained Enlightenment. Do you know what this translation, 'Exalted One', represents in Pali?

:- Bhagavan.

S: Bhagavan, yes. It is not really very satisfactory. 'Bhagavan' represents someone who is

possessed of certain attributes, certain virtues, even. I have translated it recently as 'the Richly Endowed One'. This is what it suggests in Pali and in Sanskrit. Often, of course, it is translated as 'the Lord', which conveys a completely different impression from the original Pali word; it has a quite different feeling to it. Some people think of 'Lord Buddha', just like 'Lord Jesus', and much the same sort of feeling comes across, but that is just not there in the original Pali 'Bhagavan'. 'Exalted One' is not bad, except that it suggests someone sitting up on a high seat or something of that sort - high in position. But it isn't high in position quite in that sense, but high in the sense of possessed of numerous glorious attributes. He is richly endowed in himself. So here is the Buddha - Bhagavan - seated on the bank of the river Neranjara at the foot of the bodhi-tree. He has just become Enlightened. He has been sitting there for seven days in one posture, experiencing the bliss of release. Then, during the first watch of the night, rousing himself from that concentration, he just looks and, with his Enlightened, Awakened mind, when he just looks, what does he see? He sees things arising in dependence upon causes and conditions. It is quite important that this comes first: right at the beginning, when he chooses to look with this Enlightened, Awakened mind, the first thing that he sees is Universal Conditionality. But it is rather interesting that, in this particular prose portion, though this is quite early, we get only half the story. We don't get what I call the positive nidanas; we only get the mundane nidanas, in progressive and also reverse order. We shall say a little more about that when we come to consider the verse.

No doubt everybody has gone over these particular nidanas many a time before. These, of course, are the nidanas shown in the outermost circle of the Wheel of Life. Is there any query upon that series?

: I am quite interested by the fact that the word 'activities' is used in the translation. Presumably that represents 'samskaras'? What activities does he mean?

S: Activities of mind, activities of will, volition and so on. I think Woodward always uses 'activities' for samskaras. And he uses 'Ill', [7] following Mrs Rhys Davids, for dukkha.

Have you gone through these nidanas in study groups of any kind? (Silent assent.) You have. So this is fairly familiar ground. In that case, let us go on to the verse, because there is something quite important there.

'Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift'.

You notice udana is translated as 'verse of uplift'. The original, if you translate it literally, simply says: 'He expired this expiration'. It says nothing about a verse and there is no suggestion of uplift in that moral sense. The sort of background suggestion in the original is more of the inspired seer, almost like the primitive shaman, becoming completely possessed and bursting out with something. The Buddha does something like that on the spiritual plane. He has just become Enlightened. For a whole week he has experienced the bliss of release, and then he looks around him at existence and sees that everything arises in dependence upon causes. This is such a tremendous insight - a sort of revelation that he bursts forth with his verse: 'In sooth' - that is an archaism in English which is not there in the Pali: 'truly, really' ...

'In sooth, when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin, His doubts all vanish, since he knows thing-with-its-cause.'

There is quite a bit to be said there. First of all, this word 'brahmin'. Why is that word there?

Subhuti: The brahmin was the priestly caste, so presumably, by transposition, it also meant somebody who was spiritual...

S (interrupting): Yes, it just means a holy man. Don't forget, there is no such thing as Buddhism at this stage. The Buddha hasn't even started teaching. There is the Buddha, there's no Dharma and no Sangha. So the Buddha, if he speaks at all, has to use the existing language. Here we at once come up against a difficulty: he has something new to express, but he has to use the old terms, the old language. He has to put his new wine - to use an un-Buddhistic metaphor - into the old Hindu, or even Vedic, bottles. So 'brahmin' simply stands here for a holy man, someone with some spiritual insight. You notice in Buddhist literature that Buddhists are constantly trying to give a more spiritual meaning to some of the old Vedic terms, but the terms are, as it were, resisting and sometimes they get dragged back. The Buddha and Buddhism tried hard to spiritualize the term 'brahmin', but the brahmins by birth would not allow it, and Buddhism did not succeed in doing it. But at this stage, the Buddha has no choice. He is just using the word nearest to hand. Therefore he says:

'In sooth. when things row plain to the ardent, musing brahmin'.

What about these two terms 'ardent' and 'musing'? These are very unsatisfactory. 'Ardent' - the Pali word here comes from the Sanskrit word tapas. Tapas comes from a Sanskrit verb tap, which means to heat, [8] to burn, to glow. You get the connotation? Tapas originally meant burning, heating, glowing. It means setting yourself on fire - emotionally, psychologically, spiritually. The oldest Indo-Aryan, Vedic word for what we now call spiritual practice, asceticism, sadhana, is tapas. You get it in the Vedas and in the Upanishads. It is a very common and important word. So tapas means a sort of spiritual heat, a spiritual energy, the fiery quality that you develop as a result of your own, very intense, spiritual life and endeavour. So 'ardent' here means practising tapas; heating himself; glowing, as it were, with the spiritual heat generated by his intense practice. That certainly is not represented by 'ardent'. Nowadays we talk about the ardent lover, but it does not have much more of a connotation than that. This concept of spiritual heat is quite important in Buddhism, even; it developed in the Sarvastivadin tradition, where there was a stage of spiritual practice called 'heat', when your impurities and your conditionality start melting and dripping away like melted wax. It is called the stage of heat, which immediately precedes the arising of Insight.

Now, 'musing'. That is a terrible translation. It is Mrs Rhys Davids' word, and Woodward follows it. It is jhaino in Pali, which means one practising jhana or dhyana. Sometimes it is translated 'meditating', so it would be the meditating brahmin. It means one experiencing the dhyanas, or the absorptions as I tend to call them now; in other words, the states of superconsciousness.

Really, the verse should be rendered something like: 'In truth, when things grow plain to the brahmin - the holy man, the man leading a spiritual life who, as a result of his intense spiritual practice, is spiritually on fire and who is deep in meditation with experience of higher states of consciousness'

'His doubts all vanish, since he knows thing-with-its-cause'.

You notice that there is nothing here about any particular series of nidanas. That, apparently, came later; that is a more detailed explanation. 'His doubts all vanish' because he simply sees the general, the universal truth that everything arises that does arise in dependence upon causes and conditions. When he looks around at the whole phenomenal world, the whole mundane universe, he sees that everything that exists arises. Nothing is permanent. Everything arises in dependence upon certain causes and conditions.

Unfortunately, the prose part gives only half of the story, so there is nothing about the positive nidanas - though surely the Buddha must have seen those as well at that time.

The important point is also made here that your doubts don't vanish until you really see things as they are; until things grow plain to you in the course of your spiritual life, when you see them as they are and you see how everything arises in dependence upon causes and conditions, and no longer arises when those causes and conditions are not there. When you see that, you have no more doubts.

So, in these two lines, you have a very simple, almost primitive, picture: the meditating holy man, who has burned up all his impurities and is glowing with spiritual heat and no doubt giving off spiritual light - who is absorbed in the superconscious states, the states of dhyana, who is seeing things as they really are, and his doubts, therefore, have all vanished. And what does he see? He sees the truth of thing-with-a-cause; [9] dharmas, things in the most general sense, arising in dependence upon causes, and therefore by implication ceasing to exist when those causes are no longer there. In other words, he is seeing the truth of Universal Conditionality, in all its forms.

Do you notice any difference between the prose part and the verse part?

Subhuti: The prose part seems to have already become somewhat systematized, a bit dry.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Why do you think the positive nidanas failed to be emphasized in the Udana?

S: That is quite a big question. We don't really know; we can only surmise. It is as though quite early, very soon after the death of the Buddha and possibly even in the Buddha's own lifetime, a certain preference seems to have arisen for purely negative statements. That might be connected with the rise of the Abhidharma; I don't know. I think it can't be put down entirely to the development of the analytical side of the tradition. Or perhaps it was due to the development of the rather one-sided monasticism, as we now call it. But there is no doubt that we get an emphasis on the mundane nidanas and a virtual neglect, amounting later on to a complete forgetfulness, of the positive nidanas. Luckily for us, the positive nidanas do survive in the Canon, in two places, but they were never made the basis of any systematic teaching, or brought into systematic discussions of the law or principle of Universal Conditionality. That seems extraordinary, especially as certain parallel series like the bodhyangas, which cover much the same ground, did not fall so much into neglect. But that very important link of the positive nidanas or series like the bodhyangas with the whole teaching about Pratitya-samutpada was lost sight of. Therefore you get a very one-sided presentation of the Pratitya-samutpada - so one-sided that it amounted to a serious distortion of the whole teaching. But, in the case of the Mahayana, this was rectified to some extent by

the emphasis on the Six Paramitas which, of course, belong to that whole positive training.

: Does this have anything to do with the developments soon after the Buddha died, when one section was more involved in teaching and the other section was more involved in the Buddha's example and life?

S: You could say that. There could be a connection in a very general way, because it was from among those who were as much concerned with the Buddha's life and example as with the teaching that what later on came to be called the Mahayana developed, in which there was that very positive emphasis. But, even in the case of the Mahayana, it was not specifically linked with the nidana teaching. The Mahayana took over the Hinayana version of that nidana teaching and supplemented it in other ways. But the nidana teaching as a whole was not fully presented until modern times, when Barua started digging into it a bit, and Mrs Rhys Davids, and ... But it seems astonishing that so important a thing should have been lost sight of. It is as though one spoke entirely in terms of getting rid of reactivity and never said a word about the creative. In a very abstract [10] way, that amounts to the same thing, but psychologically speaking it represents a completely different emphasis.

This is something I became even more aware of more recently in Finland - in Helsinki - taking classes: the importance of developing positive states of consciousness, even positive emotions. It is almost the most important thing, for quite a long time, for most people. I really saw that among the Finns, because they have a different - if I may use the term - national psychology from the English. Their besetting sin seems to be various forms of aversion. They are not craving-oriented particularly, but they are really aversion-oriented. They have very strong feelings of anger, hatred, contempt, envy. These are very strong and therefore I had very little real contact or communication with them. But within the FWBO and at the centre, a very positive atmosphere at last developed, mainly due to the efforts of Vajrabodhi and Bodhisri, and quite a few people in Helsinki are beginning to pick up the fact that at the FWBO Centre there is a positive and friendly atmosphere such as they don't experience anywhere else. It is quite strange; you can almost see them melting a bit. The word 'melting' is quite appropriate; there is no fiery glow but at least a gentle warmth, and these rather hard Finns have started melting, in some cases. There is definitely a friendly atmosphere at the centre. Some used almost to resent that friendly atmosphere, originally, and (were) quite uncomfortable. The male Finns especially are quite unused to expressing any positive feeling, even if they happen to have it. It was quite pathetic, at the end of the retreats: a number of people were quite stirred by what had happened on the retreat, and you could see that they had quite positive feelings, but they did not know how to express them. They could not even come up and say 'Thank you, it was a nice retreat'; they were incapable of that. It was outside their experience, they did not know how to do it or what words to use. They would just disappear without saying anything. You could see them standing there, just before they left, quite helpless, wanting to say something but not knowing how; they are so unused to speaking positively.

Devaraja: Is there a particular reason for this tendency?

S: We could go into that, but I think I had better not. Vajrabodhi and I discussed it at length. There are some definite factors which are responsible - again, a good example of conditionality that has built up over the centuries. The end result is, the Finns are, on the whole, like that - the men even more than the women, though it affects even the women quite

a lot. It was also noticeable on that retreat that all the women present were able to come up and speak a few pleasant, friendly words, but not one man did. They just stood, not knowing how to do it. That was the atmosphere.

I really felt there that we had managed to create a little centre of warmth and friendliness. It is as though, without a basis of emotional positivity, very little spiritual development is possible. That is very important indeed, and therefore it behoves us to stress those aspects of the teaching which encourage the development of very positive states of consciousness, especially that series of positive nidanas, when you speak in terms of faith, joy, ecstasy, bliss and so on. Unless there is that sort of atmosphere at the various centres and in the Movement generally, not very much is really happening. But I could see it happening there so clearly. It was almost as though we managed to burn a little [11] hole in the ice; we thawed them out a bit. But it was really difficult to do.

There you can see it more easily and clearly because, if you talk in terms of friendliness or even love - to use this very ambiguous word your enemy is obvious: it is the far enemy, hatred, in that which is all around you - craving. There is more craving and so on expressed in England. Therefore, the warmth is not so clearly distinguished from the surrounding negative emotion, because the negative emotion is the near enemy, not the far enemy. Sometimes you get the impression that people are being friendly when they are not; it is an expression of craving. So it is more difficult to distinguish the real thing. Nevertheless, the importance of emphasizing the positive emotional factors remains. They give you the build-up, leading to the highest spiritual dimension.

That is why I feel that there must be a strong emphasis on the emotionally positive in the Movement as a whole - not theoretical emphasis only, but actual generation of positive emotional states - otherwise we are not getting very far.

That is why, also, I could not help noticing last night that the Padmasambhava chanting seemed very deficient in that way. I was going to talk about it anyway; maybe this is an appropriate moment to mention it briefly. We talked about the chanting beforehand - do you remember? - and I suggested that I would like to have the Padmasambhava chanting at the end of the Puja, but it seemed to be almost completely lacking in feeling. It seemed very hard and forced, and not at all what I had in mind... It was almost a slightly displeasing end to the proceedings, whereas it should not have been like that at all. What did others feel?

Sona: I agree. (Voices assenting.) ... (inaudible)

: Shouting.

S: Yes. I had been under the impression recently - or at least I got the feeling - that the Padmasambhava chanting had dropped out for some reason or other, but I had not said anything about it. But I was reminded of it, when I was in Helsinki, because the Padmasambhava chanting is done there at the end of each Puja. They have one big Puja once a week for the regulars, with a meditation and a study - they are doing Precepts of the Gurus - and then they have a Puja, and then there is the Padmasambhava chanting and Bodhisri leads it. It was so beautifully done, with such a good feeling, that I was again reminded of all this, so that is why I started trying to revive it here. But the way it was done yesterday was completely different from there. The tune, of course, was the same, but the feeling of it was

entirely different; there seemed to be no feeling.

: I think that's why it stopped being used.

S: So why is this? I have only got a few rough and ready ideas. First of all, it really dragged. I made this comment about the Puja some weeks ago, didn't I? It dragged. So last night I myself tried to speed it up a little, and that succeeded, but I don't know whether anyone was under the impression that I wanted it to go faster and faster, but people were going faster and faster, and sort of hammering it, which seemed completely wrong. It was very hard, as though a lot of negative energy was going into the chanting; but there was no feeling, no sweetness or anything like that. So I wondered whether people were under the impression, since it's Padmasambhava, that it has got to be very strong and [12] therefore they shout and try to force energy into it under the impression that they are doing the right thing. Whereas, in Helsinki, I noticed, when Vajrabodhi led it, people chanted it very gently, almost as though they were chanting it to themselves. It was not particularly loud. It built up a little, quite naturally, and then they let it die away slowly until people were just chanting it under their breaths, and then stopped. But last night, it just stopped, bomp, like that, after going down a little bit. It seemed quite odd. But why is this?

Devaraja: I had the impression that people didn't really want to chant it.

S: Maybe, because of that previous experience - because it hadn't gone right. But what went wrong, and where, and when? It was all right, as far as I remember, two or three years ago.

ABC: It was quite good on the men's retreats that Padmaraja did...

S: But the main thing that struck me was that there was no feeling. That is why I am mentioning the point now. It seemed forced, as though energy were being forced into it, but no natural feeling. Perhaps we need not discuss it any more at the moment, but it is something to be borne in mind and watched.

Subhuti: I think there is a bit of a wrong view with respect to mantras in general. For instance, with the Vajrapani mantra, you get the sense that a lot of crude and negative energy goes into it. People think that it is a matter of sublimating anger and letting it out in that way, almost in an encounter group type of way. I think that happens with all the mantras, even the Tara mantra - there is a false, sentimental feeling there. I think that is what is at the back of the Padmasambhava mantra: Padmasambhava is where you get your anger out.

ABC: I think there is an emphasis at the Centre on getting things going: a feeling of forcing things at times, getting things done anyhow.

S: You think that spreads over into the Puja?

ABC: Yes.

Sona: What do you mean by saying that the Puja drags?

S: It's slow and heavy, not slow and solemn, just heavy, like dragging a weight along; drawn-out, almost lethargic - this was a few weeks ago. It is artificially prolonged for no

apparent reason. Since I used to take the Puja originally in London - certainly of late - everything seems to have slowed down in this respect and seems to drag. There's no lightness to it. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, it might have been due partly to the fact that there was no leader, so I suggested that you went back to having a leader and chanting in response, so that people do it all together. Maybe they are trying not to get ahead of one another, so they are falling behind one another and in this way getting slower and slower. I got a very heavy feeling from it some weeks ago. That is why I started mentioning it.

Subhuti: It's certainly a lot better since you did, but it's still there.

[13]

Devaraja: Maybe people take too solemn an approach to it, so it becomes solemn in the wrong way. People aren't in it to enjoy themselves - it's a kind of pseudo-religiosity.

Sona: I must say that, up in Norfolk, in the Order meetings, we have started studying the Puja with readings from the Bodhicarya. Since then, I have found that one can put so much more into it, more positive emotion. I wondered if we should start doing that down in London. Because when you really study the text, you start to realize what all the words mean and what you are saying, and then you can really visualize doing the mental Puja at the same time.

S: Also I think it is a question of realizing that you don't have to try to recite the mantras as loudly as possible. You certainly don't have to shout them. You should start off, at least, doing it quite gently and quietly - the Padmasambhava mantra especially. Whereas, yesterday, it seemed much too loud and almost noisy for that little room. It was bouncing back in a quite unpleasant way.

Let us try again this evening. You will probably go to the other extreme (laughter) ...

: Shy!

S: That would be better! And then we could build up from there; just chant it gently, musically as it were. It sounded, one could say, very one-sidedly masculine in an unnecessary way.

Anyway, this is just an illustration of the general principle that the positive emotional states need to be developed. It is quite interesting, though surprising, that so early, as far as the Theravada tradition was concerned, these more positive teachings were lost sight of. But the same sort of thing has happened, in a practical way, in this sort of context: the positive emotional states have been neglected. If this is not corrected, sooner or later it would find some theoretical expression. Maybe something like that happened with the early monks - who knows? Probably we shall never know now. Maybe in their sanghitis - their chantings together - they started chanting very strongly and harshly. Maybe we just don't know; this is speculation, but it is not impossible. In this way, a hard, pseudo-masculine spirit crept into the whole tradition. They started neglecting, or even forgetting, some of these more positive teachings, where the importance of the positive emotions was stressed.

Subhuti: I wondered, when we were studying the Majjhima-Nikaya - a lot of it is cast in quite a negative tone, but if you have a strong feeling of what the atmosphere of the background was, you can have a mental image of the Buddha there, speaking the sutta, and it has a quite

different feeling. I wondered whether it was just that that side of things had not been conveyed in the Scripture.

S: Yes. The Scripture does not convey a complete literary picture. It only tells you what was said and what was recited. It is just the bare bones; it does not give the background. But, as you see, we do get quite a bit of that in this text in an interesting way. That is what makes the Udana so valuable and that is one reason why we are studying it.

[14]

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion... Then ... the Exalted One, rousing himself from that concentration of mind, during the middle watch of the night gave close attention to causal uprising in reverse order, thus: This not being, that becomes not; by the ceasing of this, that ceases to be; namely: By the ceasing of ignorance, the ceasing of activities; by the ceasing of activities, the ceasing of consciousness; by the ceasing of consciousness, the ceasing of mind-and-body; by the ceasing of mind-and-body, the ceasing of the six sense-spheres; by the ceasing of the six sense-spheres, the ceasing of contact; by the ceasing of contact, the ceasing of feeling; by the ceasing of feeling, the ceasing of craving; by the ceasing of craving, the ceasing of grasping; by the ceasing of grasping, the ceasing of becoming; by the ceasing of becoming, the ceasing of birth; by the ceasing of birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair come to cease. Thus is the ceasing of this mass of Ill.

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin, His doubts all vanish, since he knows the wane of causes."

S: That is exactly the same, except that here the Buddha knows not the arising of things with cause, but the waning, the passing away, the ceasing of them.

This is the sort of presentation you get throughout the Pali Canon, which is one reason why it is so bulky. The whole incident or episode is repeated with only a single term or phrase changed. That is very good when you are chanting together and reflecting upon things, but it does not make for attractive reading, once the oral tradition has been put into literary form.

The verse is the same, except for those few words.

Let us pass on to the next section, where we have a new verse - or rather, two new lines at the end.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One ... Then ... the Exalted One ... during the last watch of the night gave close attention to causal uprising both in direct and in reverse order, thus: This being, that becomes; by the arising of this, that arises. This not being, that is not; by the ceasing of this, that ceases, namely: Conditioned by ignorance ... Thus is the arising of this mass of Ill. But by the utter fading out and ceasing of ignorance, the ceasing of activities ... Thus is the ending of this mass of Ill. Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

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In sooth when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin, Routing the host of Mara

doth he stand, Just as the sun when lighting up the sky."

S: This is a slightly different presentation. You notice, by the way, that these three verses say 'when things grow plain'. That is a very simple, non-technical way of referring to what later on came to be described as the development of Insight, or even Wisdom. It is when things grow plain, or clear; when you see clearly without confusion, without projection, without conditioning; you just see things as they are. That is all Insight, or Wisdom, really is. That is a completely simple, non-technical expression of that. 'Ardent' means with all one's energies stirred up or roused, sublimated, free and open. 'Musing', of course, means absorbed in superconscious states.

So you could say that these three terms - 'ardent', 'musing' and 'seeing things grow plain' refer to sila, samadhi and prajna. The ardour is the stirring up of energy; the musing is the absorption in the higher states of consciousness, and the seeing things plainly is Insight or Wisdom. But it is completely non-technical, ordinary language. There are no technicalities at this stage, so you are quite close to the original experience. It is ordinary, literate - not even literary, but literate language; common parlance, nothing technical, no technical terms. And a bit of popular mythology: when the brahmin, having roused his energy glowing with spiritual fervour and absorbed in higher states of consciousness - sees things clearly as they are, then he destroys, he disperses all the forces of evil, and he stands there just like the sun lighting up the whole sky. So you have this very primitive, basic imagery of light - the victory of light over darkness, which you find in so many so-called solar mythologies in all the high religions of the world. The sun, and the light of the sun, are the symbol of Truth, Reality.

The language, the expression, is still very simple. There is no such thing as Buddhism, not even the Dharma. The Buddha, out of the depths of his own experience, is using ordinary, simple language to explain to himself, as it were, what is happening.

: What word would be used for 'consciousness'?

S: You mean in the prose? 'Consciousness' is vijñana, which is not so much consciousness in general but the initial consciousness arising once again in the womb of the mother, in dependence on the ignorance and ignorance-based activities of the previous existence. In dependence upon all that, there arises a so-called new consciousness, which is the germ of the present existence in this life. This arises at the instant of conception.

'Consciousness' is not really a good translation. I have been thinking that what is often translated as 'consciousness' would often be better translated as 'sensitivity' or just 'sense'. That suggests life, but with an element of awareness as light, or faint cognitive elements, added. It conveys what you mean, for instance, when you say that the fertilized ovum is alive. It is sentient. Yes, vijñana is sentience. That is the precise word. Often the word 'sentience' is much clearer and closer to the meaning of vijñana than 'consciousness'. 'Sentience' contains the potentiality of development into consciousness in the higher sense.

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Devaraja: Is it the same word as comes in a later stage in the Udāna? Consciousness - you said that it arises due to different causes at a later date, I think in the Sūrya.

Sagaramati: ...form...mind and body? That's consciousness again, isn't it?

S: No, nama-rupa. We say 'the senses'. So what does this mean? What is a sense? Here again, you get the same sort of word - sense and sentient. It is not consciousness in a narrow, technical, dry sense, but the senses are so called because they sense things. They have an awareness of things. They are alive. You could say that the eye senses visual forms, whereas usually we translate it (by saying) that the eye is conscious of visual forms. That perhaps is not quite right. The eye senses, because it is sentient.

Sagaramati: Could it be defined as ... consciousness?

S: You could say that, yes. So if you translate vijñāna as 'consciousness' in this particular context, it is not so clear, because what is the nature of that consciousness? It is the very embryonic consciousness of the newly-fertilised ovum. It isn't conscious in the sense in which we usually say that a human being is conscious (as opposed to) unconscious; it is sentient, it is alive. There aren't even senses at that stage, but it is alive; the possibility of development of the senses is there. It is more like 'sentience'. So, in dependence upon the ignorance and the ignorance-based activities of what we call the previous life, there arises in this life, at the instant of conception, a new life which is quick, sentient, alive, and which contains the potentiality for all further growth and development. But you would hardly say that the embryo is conscious. There is a big discussion about this, but it stretches the meaning of the word 'conscious'. It is connected also with the whole question of whether it is human. There is the discussion in connection with the question of abortion, isn't there? - whether, when you abort, you are destroying a human being or only the potentiality of a human being. The Buddhist view is that you are destroying a human being: that it is sentient, with the sentience of a human being, and not a lower form of life. I don't know whether people are aware of this, or whether they have studied it under the heading of the First Precept, but that is why, in Buddhism, abortion is regarded as equivalent to murder - the taking of human life. Therefore, if one applies the First Precept, one can't be guilty of abortion or help at an abortion. Because what develops eventually is not an animal, but a human being.

Sometimes, it is said, though, that the fertilized embryo is not human - that, in a sense, humanity comes later. But I personally think that is very doubtful indeed because, if you arrest that development, you don't have an animal, you just have an arrested human development.

Are there any thoughts or reflections about this? Has it been discussed at all?

Sagaramati: We discussed it last week at 55. We were thinking of getting a benefit together and Richard Green (?), and the money that was made from it was going to be divided among certain charities. One was the anti-abortion Bill.

S: The 'pro-anti-abortion' Bill! But had they thought it out, or were [17] they just going along with something vaguely pseudo-liberal?

Devaraja: Sorry - where were they going to - ?

: Somewhere in Muswell Hill; I think.

Devaraja: I mean are they against the abortion Bill or for it?

: I was against it and Green was for it.

S: So they would be virtually pro-abortion?

: Yes.

ABC: Is it more, though, that they care for freedom of choice rather than something actually being killed?

Devaraja: I suppose it was whether there should be freedom of choice to commit murder or not - whether you consider it right that man should pass laws against that or not.

Subhuti: Even apart from the question whether (the embryo) is human or not, the First Precept says that one should not take life in any form.

S: Yes, that means taking the First Precept in its most basic and elementary form, which is that you should not take human life. That is the level below which you must not fall. Obviously, the ideal thing would be to cause no hurt whatever to any living being. But that is not the obligatory minimum, it is the ideal maximum. If you fall below the minimum, you cannot regard yourself as practising that Precept at all and, to that extent, you are not a Buddhist.

Devaraja: I admit it is a bit of a digression, but it seems to me that, like so many things, the problem is not the problem of abortion, but it is the possibility of single parents existing in society in a satisfactory way, and whether it is possible to be a single parent without so many problems becoming apparent in that sense. As usual, it is attacked from completely the wrong angle. The blame is laid on the child.

S: The basis is confusion of thought. That is what we come up against again and again. In other words, we have micchaditthi, where the question is not even discussed in its proper terms. But, certainly, it should be clearly understood that the traditional Buddhist teaching is that abortion involves the taking of human life and, therefore, to commit an abortion or to co-operate in committing an abortion means to transgress or fall below the absolute minimum required for the observance of the First Precept, so you are no longer observing the First Precept at all in that case. You have broken it in the worst way in which it can be broken, practically.

Sagaramati: The argument for it is usually that the child will be brought into the world without love and will grow up to be a delinquent. That, again, is based on a micchaditthi.

S: This is quite hypothetical. Many unwanted children grow up quite well and thrive, as if to spite their parents! Lots of wanted children [18] grow up very badly, too, because they are so-desperately wanted that parents have a possessive, neurotic attitude towards them, which harms the child quite seriously. You could, if you were going to press that argument, even say that most people should not have children at all, because most parents are bad for children; that, indeed, the fact that parents want children can often be very suspect and a reason for not allowing them to have them; and that an unwanted child stands a better chance of growing up healthily. It seems to me the philosophy really is, 'I want to be able to do what I like, regardless of the consequences. I want to remain perfectly free, without having to consider

anybody else, and do as I like.' That seems to be the basic attitude. It ties up with so many other things.

Subhuti: It seems to me, in a way, that that argument has tended to hinge on this philosophical distinction, 'Is it a human life, or not?' That seems to me the wrong ground on which to argue, because it is very dubious. The real question is what the results from allowing that attitude would be, and what state of mind that encourages.

S: I think that this is something which is quite important within the context of the Movement. It does not arise directly for men, but certainly for women. Men are only accessories, either before or after the fact, but often they have a certain responsibility and, sometimes, a certain say. So it is quite important to know what the Buddhist position is on this.

There was one case some time ago with one of our female Friends - she is no longer in circulation - who had an abortion. She told me afterwards that, whereas before the abortion she was getting on quite well with her meditations and so on, after the abortion she was quite unable to do the metta-bhavana. I found that quite significant. She realized the significance of that, and that is why she told me about it; she was quite surprised.

Perhaps that is enough on that.

"iv Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Uruvela, on the bank of the river Neranjara, under Goatherds' Banyan, having just won the highest wisdom. Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated for seven days in one posture and experienced the bliss of release. Then the Exalted One, after the lapse of those seven days, roused himself from that concentration of mind.

Now a certain brahmin of the Huhunka-jati, of a carping nature, came to where the Exalted One was and on reaching him greeted him courteously, and after the exchange of greetings and courtesies, stood at one side. As he thus stood that brahmin said this to the Exalted One:

' Pray, master Gotama, to what extent is one a brahmin ? And again, what are the things which constitute a brahmin?'

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

A brahmin, who has barred out evil things, is not A man of humph and pshaw. Whose is no stain, Who has the self controlled, in Vedas versed, [19] Whu lives the Brahma-life, 'tis he may say His is the Brahma-faith, for whom there are No false excrescences in all the world."

S: We have got quite a long verse there. It is rather interesting that a brahmin appears. According to the Udana, therefore, a brahmin - a Brahmin by birth - is the first person who the Buddha meets after Enlightenment. It is as if to say that, after the Buddha's Enlightenment, the first problem he comes up against is the problem of ethnic religion - the indigenous civilization and so on; the stereotyped concept of the brahmin. It is interesting that what the brahmin wants to know is, 'What is a brahmin? What makes one a brahmin? What are the things which constitute a brahmin?' - as if he is aware of the conflict, aware that the Buddha has a different view from the traditional, conventional view. Here you see the

Buddha's Enlightenment experience coming into conflict with the old ethnic values. You see what became the universal religion, as I call it, coming into contact with the ethnic religion - the real brahmin with the pseudo-brahmin; the brahmin by virtue of his knowledge and understanding with the brahmin by birth.

It is interesting that he is called Huhunka-jatika. The commentaries have different things to say about that, and modern scholars, too. He is the brahmin who goes round saying 'Humph'. He has a contemptuous, sniffing attitude towards everything - you could say he is rather arrogant. After all, he occupies the topmost rung of the orthodox ethnic religious hierarchy. A brahmin is a god on earth, according to some later traditions, so he wants to know 'Who is this Buddha who claims that he is the real brahmin?'

Some say that Huhunka-jatika means 'reciting the mantra hum', but it seems more likely that the other explanation is the correct one - he is a very typical brahmin with a contemptuous attitude towards others. You can meet these brahmins even today in India; there are quite a few still around.

So the Buddha makes his position clear, though he is still having to use the old phraseology, the old vocabulary. He says,

'A brahmin, who has barred out evil things, is not A man of humph and pshaw.'

In other words, 'He is not like you.' The true brahmin does not have a contemptuous attitude towards others. He is not arrogant. He does not regard himself as the highest person in the socio-religious hierarchy. 'Whose is no stain, Who has the self controlled'.

He has not eradicated or annihilated the self. He has controlled, sublimated, those energies which are referred to by the term 'self'.

'In Vedas versed'. What does this mean? It can mean the three Vedas out of the Hindu four. The fourth one was added after the Buddha's time. The three Vedas are the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda. He is versed in those Vedas. But it has another meaning: the three knowledges, that is to say, the knowledge of one's own previous abodes or existences; the knowledge of the coming into being and passing away of beings according to their karmas; and the knowledge of the destruction of the asravas. In this sense, 'brahmin' means an Arhant in the later, more technical, [20] sense. It is not clear which meaning this verse has - whether the Buddha is indeed saying that one who knows the three traditional Hindu Vedas is really a brahmin or, in fact, one who has the three knowledges which characterize the Arhant.

'Who lives the Brahma-life'. Brahmacharya: this is a quite interesting term. 'Brahma' means high, noble, exalted, supreme, so the Brahmacharya is the high, noble, supreme or, as we would say, spiritual life; or sublime life, noble life, holy life. Later it meant simply celibacy.

'...tis he may say His is the Brahma-faith',

the Brahmavada, the Brahma-belief or Brahmanism, or the Brahma tradition ...

'...for whom there are No false excrescences in all the world.'

The footnote says that 'false excrescences', as Woodward translates it, is *ussada*, 'moral warts'. This suggests that evil, unskillful states are as it were excrescences, that they are external to us, not internal, in a deep metaphysical sense. There is a verse in the *Anguttara-Nikaya* which says 'The mind is pure by nature' - the defilements only come in afterwards from outside. Much Mahayana and Vajrayana teaching is based upon that - that the mind in its depths is essentially pure, so one has simply to get rid of the excrescences, the defilements.

It is interesting to find that reflected or anticipated even here, in this very early Pali text: the view that unskillful states as it were come from outside - not outside psychologically but metaphysically; that the real mind, the true mind, is pure.

This is also perhaps reflected in the phrase

'A brahmin, who has barred out evil things'.

It is as though the evil things are outside and can be permanently kept from coming inside. Obviously, this sort of approach can be and has been misunderstood, but it is valid in itself, and we find it here. Are there any queries about that verse?

Colin: Could you say a bit more about it being misunderstood?

S: It is misunderstood, perhaps, more in its Vedantic, and even Zen, form - that your mind is pure; that you are Buddha; you have to do nothing; there is nothing to be added to your basic perfection; you don't have to engage in any particular spiritual practice. For instance, Master So-and-so finds a monk meditating. 'What are you doing?' 'I am meditating to purify my mind.' So the master picks up a stone and starts polishing it. The disciple says, 'What are you doing?' and he says, 'I am polishing this stone to make it into a mirror.' In other words, 'What is the use? You can't do it. You already are that. There is no need to polish the stone. You are the mirror. Realize that you are the mirror. Realize that you are pure already.' This is very dangerous. This is possibly why that approach - though, in principle, valid - has never been stressed within the Theravada, or even very much within Buddhism as a whole. Because the misunderstanding consists in the ordinary, unilluminated self appropriating this perfect nature as an attribute of itself, rather than dissolving itself in order to realize that perfect nature.

[21]

Also we must not forget that, originally, these teachings were communicated orally by teachers to disciples who they thought were ready for them, not to others. But nowadays these things are printed. Books are written about them. Anybody can read. Anybody can pick up a book which says, 'You are Buddha. You don't have to do anything. Just realize that you are Buddha.' And they think that 'realize' means understand it mentally or intellectually, so they think, 'Well, yes, I am Buddha. There is no need for me to do anything - no religious practice.' Even Krishnamurti may unintentionally... (short break in recording)

Devaraja: ... they have incredible difficulty in getting off their backsides and getting on with the spiritual life. All they seem to do is have a collection of tapes and talk about Krishnamurti, but I never see any real evolution of change in them.

S: Well, I knew quite a few of them in Bombay and they were very much like that.

So, therefore, the whole emphasis which we find in Buddhism on development and growth, and gradually weeding out the unskilful states and strengthening the skilful states practically, is much the more helpful approach - even though that statement is true. It may even be helpful sometimes, for some people, at a certain stage in their meditation, just to reflect, 'Well, after all, it is there, in the depths of my own being'; (helpful) sometimes when you feel a bit discouraged, when it is all a bit too much, (to think), 'It is there, after all. Therefore I have only got to work very hard and I will realize it.' That can sometimes be very encouraging. But to start off with that, and to tell (it to) someone who has not yet done any spiritual practice at all, and whose ego is perhaps well developed and may even have spiritual or intellectual pretensions - that is very dangerous. But, unfortunately, such people nowadays do have access to that sort of literature and are very happy with it. They even go away and write books of their own about it. It is the opposite extreme from declaring yourself a miserable sinner who can't do anything at all for himself.

So here you see the beginnings of that conflict between the real brahmin and the pseudo-brahmin - the real individual and the ethnic 'superior' - which runs right through the history of Buddhism in India, and which, in the end, in a sense, Buddhism lost, so far as India was concerned. It didn't betray its own principles, but it was subverted or circumvented by the ethnic orthodoxy.

It shows how careful you have to be when you use somebody else's language. In the case of our own Movement, the danger lies in our using the language of psychology. We may try to inject a spiritual meaning into those psychological terms, but if we are not careful the original psychological meaning will assert itself, and the spiritual significance that we have tried to import into those terms will be lost. I feel that this is happening in some circles in the United States with some of the Tibetan Buddhist groups there. I was very interested to go through the successive issues of Crystal Mirror. I see it beginning to happen there.

Sagaramati: Can you give us an example of that?

S: Not without getting hold of those issues, I think. There was one example - not quite of this particular kind - with regard to the Pratitya-samutpada: 'situational happening'.

[22]

Several: Whew!

S: You see? It sounds quite interesting; you can imagine it going down well at some seminar - 'We're going to talk about the Buddha's teaching about situational happening'. But you can see how easily this could be drawn into the psychotherapeutic, existential orbit, and you would lose sight of the original Buddhist teaching and its Buddhist meaning. It sounds very snappy and up-to-date, but this is what one must really watch. Guenther is a bit prone to that sort of thing; 'situational happening' may even have come from him originally. It makes you think you understand it and know what it is all about. It sounds very trendy and 'with it'. So maybe, in the end, you stop talking about Universal Conditionality and the twelve links, and you talk about situational happening, and you get right away from the Buddha's teaching.

I think the biggest general danger in this way is that you think, first of all, therapeutically. You think of Buddhist traditions and methods as a sort of therapy, which means that you insensibly replace the Buddhist goal, which is Enlightenment, by purely modern

psychotherapeutic goals of alleged mental health. For instance, in some of the programmes of one of those institutes, they spoke of 'prostration therapy'. It means you are Going for Refuge, doesn't it, when you do that prostration practice? How can you regard it as a therapy? If anything is sacrilege, that is. You are misusing the Refuges. In other words, you are using the Going for Refuge for therapeutic purposes.

: You bolster up the conditions.

S: Right, you bolster up the conditions. But this is the trend, this is the tendency that I am very uneasy about. It is happening in the States, I think, with all these Tibetan groups, with the exception, so far as I can see, of Geshe Wangyal, who doesn't go in for this at all, not one little bit. It is his Door of Liberation that we shall be studying in the last of these three seminars. But you see the sort of sleight of hand?

Devaraja: I find it quite unappetising to read some of Trungpa's material. It is too snappy, too much like a slick American business course.

S: But you see, Trungpa is not too bad because at least he knows Tibetan Buddhism. But suppose somebody else (writes who) hasn't had the contact that he has had. They just take over his language. Then there is a complete lapse into the snappy and the psychotherapeutic.

So you might draw in a few people by calling it prostration therapy, but they will be after therapy, not prostration and Going for Refuge. They might progress to prostration and Going for Refuge; it is also possible, but it is quite a big risk to take. In, say, Christian terms to make it a bit more familiar for some people - you could speak of 'Mass therapy' - the sacrament of the mass. 'Go to mass, it's a good therapy.' Even in that context, you can see how absurd and sacrilegious it is. You might say, 'Praying to God is good therapy.' (Chuckles.) It is the tip of the iceberg and it is quite dangerous. To psychologise - to give spiritual terms a psychological meaning or to translate them into psychological terms - and (then) forget about the spiritual significance that originally was there to some extent, means that you are left merely with psychology with a few exotic Tibetan trimmings which, no doubt, [23] sooner or later, you will get rid of.

That is what is happening, and it is one reason why they are a bit successful. You have got 'prostration therapy' thrown together in the same session with 'encounter group' and 'body sensitivity' and so on, on the same sort of level and (given the same sort of value). Prostration involves Going for Refuge; and you have got anybody doing it who just happens to come along, people who don't want to commit themselves to Going for Refuge at all, but even they are invited to use the Going for Refuge as a therapy, which is dreadful. I think we must beware of that sort of thing. I don't think we are in any actual danger of it here, but we can note that it is going on elsewhere.

- If ever we do spread to the States, we may have to be very careful of this. Perhaps if we do ever spread to the States we shall see to it that only strict, rather dry, Abhidharma-minded Order Members go there! (laughter) - Order Members with the least charisma. (Reflective chuckles.)

: Such as ... ?

S: They all have their own charisma. You speak for yourself.

: ...I'm no good.

S: Any other comments or queries? Actually, we shall see, throughout this whole chapter, that the Buddha is quite concerned (about this point), because others have come up and said, 'Who is the real brahmin?' It is quite significant that this initial chapter is devoted to that question, 'What or who is the real brahmin?' You get a direct conflict right from the beginning between the values of the universal and the values of the ethnic religion.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now on that occasion the venerable Sariputta, Moggallana the Great, Kassapa the Great, Kaccayana the Great, Kotthita the Great, Kappina the Great, Cunda the Great, also the venerable Anuruddha, Revata, Devadatta and Ananda, came to where the Exalted One was. And the Exalted One saw those venerable ones from afar as they came, and at the sight of them said to the monks: 'Monks, these are brahmins coming, these are brahmins coming!' At these words a certain monk, a brahmin by birth, said this to the Exalted One: 'Pray, sir, to what extent is one a brahmin, and what are the things which constitute a brahmin?' Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Barring out evil things, who ever mindful fare Awakened, bond-free, - such in the world are surely brahmins."

[24]

S: We see an interesting thing here, at the beginning of this little section. There is a change of scene. The previous four episodes have all taken place in the vicinity of the Bodhi-tree, immediately after the Buddha's Enlightenment, but we are quite a few hundred miles away from there now. We are at Sravasti, the present-day Balamkur(?). You have been there, haven't you, do you remember?

: Yes.

S: That is where we are now, where you met the venerable Sangharassana(?). It was the retreat - not really a monastery, a retreat - established for the Buddha by the merchant Anathapindika some years after his Enlightenment. So we have moved on in time. You can tell that also by the fact that there is a band of followers: Sariputta has turned up by this time, Moggallana the Great, Kassapa the Great, Kaccayana the Great, Kotthita, Kappina, Cunda the Great, Anuruddha, Revata, Devadatta and Ananda. Devadatta has not defected; here he is along with the rest, and he is described as a brahmin, as you will see. This raises several interesting questions, but we will not go into those now.

So the Buddha sees a band of his disciples coming in the distance, and he says to the monks who are around: 'Monks, these are brahmins coming, these are brahmins coming!' Perhaps he said it deliberately: 'They are the real brahmins, these monks of mine', many of whom we know to have been Kshatriyas by birth, like Ananda, not brahmins by birth.

'At these words a certain monk, a brahmin by birth, said this to the Exalted One: "Pray, sir, to what extent is one a brahmin, and what are the things which constitute a brahmin?"'

He was a brahmin by birth, so he had been accustomed to the old ethnic definition of a brahmin, but here he finds the Buddha describing as brahmins all these prominent disciples of his who are coming in the distance. Clearly, there is a conflict, so he wants to know 'Why is this?' He knows that they are not brahmins by birth, but the Buddha is describing them as brahmins. What does the Buddha mean? What is his definition of a brahmin? So he asks: 'What are the things which constitute a brahmin in your sense, which obviously is not the old ethnic sense?' And the Buddha gives a very brief definition:

'Barring out evil things, who ever mindful fare Awakened'

that is, Enlightened ...

'bond-free, - such in the world are surely brahmins.'

It is nothing to do with birth, with rights, or with reciting the Vedas. It is a matter of individual spiritual realization and development. They are the brahmins.

It is rather as though we tried to upgrade the word 'clergymen'. You are the real clergymen - Subhuti is a real clergyman, Devaraja is a real clergyman. And suppose a real clergyman, in the ethnic sense, was to come in from the ... and heard someone describing all of you as clergymen, he would say, 'In what sense are they clergymen?' 'They have no homes of their own, they are working full-time for our [25] Movement, they meditate every day. That is what we mean by clergymen', and it would be clear that that was a very different thing from the sense in which he was a clergyman, because he had a wife and family at home, and he certainly would not be meditating every day. But eventually we might not be able to retain our upgrading of this term. Hundreds of years on, members of the Order might become clergymen in the ordinary, old-fashioned sense as some of the Buddhist monks eventually became - especially in Nepal, where they married and settled down with their wives and families in the vihara and became just sort of priests - Buddhist brahmins.

: And in Japan.

S: And in Japan, yes.

Sona: Where it says 'awakened' and 'ever-mindful', in what way does it mean that? Awakened as to what one has to do ...

S: Awakened to the Truth, awakened to Reality, seeing things as they are.

Subhuti: They are all arhants, in fact.

S: Yes, but arhant in that sense seems to have been a rather later usage. It meant originally just 'worthy' - spiritually worthy - then 'a spiritually developed person', and then 'someone who had realized Nirvana or Enlightenment'. But in the early Pali text it does not have that precise meaning at all. We shall encounter this quite a few times - that words which later had a very precise doctrinal significance are here used in a very general, ordinary sort of way, so you come nearer to the original usage and even the original life of the Buddha's disciples.

Subhuti: So arhant is an example of a word that has been upgraded.

S: Yes, but also narrowed in a way. In Mahayana literature, sometimes 'arhant' seems to mean someone cold, selfish and individualistic, which certainly was not the original meaning of the term at all.

Devaraja: Is this related to the bit in the Tiratana-vandana translated as 'worthy of offerings, worthy of salutation with folded hands'?

S: No, that is simply a verbal term-in ...: pujaniya, worthy of offerings. Iya means 'able', as we would say in English; worshipable, capable of being worshipped, able to be worshipped, worthy of worship, deserving of worship. Ahuneyyo, pahuneyyo, dakkineyyo - worthy of, capable of, therefore deserving. 'Worship-worthy', you could say; 'offering-worthy'. But not as strong as that.

You have 'worshipful', and officials were addressed as 'arhant' at the time of the Buddha, just as we say 'His Worship the Mayor'. But it was gradually upgraded. So the monks and those leading a spiritual life were the worthy ones; they were worship-worthy, deserving of worship. But then 'arhant' became a highly technical term and the meaning was fixed perhaps rather narrowly.

We find this in early Buddhism as reflected in the Udana, that everything is quite fluid; there is nothing rigid or Buddhistic. That is [26] one reason why it is a very valuable text.

Any comments on that, or on those first five sections?

Sagaramati: (inaudible)... conditioned co-production... becoming...?

S: The link becoming?

Sagaramati: Between birth and grasping?

S: This is bhava in Pali. It means 'being' and also 'becoming', because in Buddhism being is becoming. There is no being in fact, nothing is static. Everything moves, everything develops, everything grows - or deteriorates. So it is becoming, it is the process of development between, as it were, the last of the old and the first of the new. Sometimes it is considered to refer to the whole period of pregnancy, the intrauterine period. According to the Sarvastivadins, it is the intermediate period between death and rebirth, but the Theravadins do not agree that there is an intermediate period. Then antarabhava is the same word, bhava the intermediate state, as it is usually translated when it occurs in Tibetan.

This is our first session on the Udana. We have gone through these five sections. Does anyone have any particular impression, as yet, from these five little sections that we have gone through, the first of this work? Anything at all distinctive?

Devaraja: When I was reading through some of it before, the verses didn't seem to have much life in them; they seemed to be confusing.

S: That's partly the translation; especially if you translate tapassino as 'ardent' and caino as 'musing', you get no meaning at all.

: They are very simple. It's what you said about being really near to the experience.

S: It is interesting that the Udana opens with the Buddha's Enlightenment and just after, and it remains in the vicinity of the bodhi-tree for four sections, and then the scene moves to Sravasti, which was, in a sense, the most important centre of the Buddha's activity, where he spent more rainy seasons than in any other place. Later today, we shall see that next, the scene moves to Rajagaha or Rajgir, which was another very important scene of his activities. We shall see also, eventually, I hope, that the whole of the Udana has been put together with a certain amount of what may even be described as literary skill, even though it was originally put together not in written form but in oral form. It has definitely been compiled with art and with care. We shall see this gradually.

: Presumably this appears also in Tibetan and Chinese accounts?

S: Yes, there is a version. I don't know whether they have ever been compared. There is a work which is known as Udanavarga in Sanskrit, transmitted by the Sarvastivadins, but this was not the Udana but the Dhammapada.

Also we notice the immediate introduction of the topic of the brahmin: 'Who is the brahmin? What is the brahmin?' That really means, 'What is the nature of the spiritual ideal?' Obviously, it is the first thing [27] to be made clear. What is the spiritual ideal? Is it the brahmin in the old ethnic sense, or is it the brahmin in the sense of the Buddha, the new spiritual sense? So the spiritual ideal is clarified first. It is very important that almost the first thing that the Buddha does after enunciating the law of universal conditionality is to clarify the nature of the spiritual ideal. There was confusion because the Buddha had to use the old language, so the question arises, 'Are you using the language in the old sense or in a new sense of your own? If the latter, what is that new sense? What do you say the brahmin is? What do you say the spiritual ideal is?'

Devaraja: I think I remember you saying, perhaps in a lecture, that the division, once so rigid, between the castes (was breaking down), and that at that time, or at some time, a transition (was possible) between the castes.

S: You can probably say that the divisions between castes were not so rigid or strict then. But the division between brahmin and non-brahmin, simply, seems to have been as rigid then as it ever was, and the brahmins were making a very determined bid for a general recognition of their social and religious supremacy on grounds of birth. And the Buddha came right up against this, and Buddhism came up against it all through its history in India, which is one of the reasons why Buddhism disappeared from India - the hostility of the brahmins by birth, because Buddhism refused to accept their claims and recognize their credentials. So, though many individuals became followers of the Buddha and Buddhists, the brahmins as a caste or class always remained strongly opposed to Buddhism, right down to the present. It was one of my first experiences after being ordained as a sramanera at Kusinara. We were walking, winding our way up to Nepal, to Lumbini, and we lost our way shortly after leaving Kusinara, so we stopped and asked somebody to direct us, and he happened to be a brahmin. So he at once asked us who and what we were, and where we were coming from. When we explained we were coming from Kusinara and that we were Buddhists, at once his attitude became very hostile. It was quite remarkable. The brahmins have really inherited a tradition of hostility to Buddhism. Even though they usually know nothing about Buddhist teaching at all - that has

all died out - they feel very hostile towards Buddhism. It is very common among orthodox brahmins. There is a clash between the universal and the ethnic - the spiritual ideal and the ethnic ideal and we find it right at the very beginning. It is quite important that it occurs here, as if to say that the universal religion, the religion of the tradition that upholds the realization of truth by the individual, at once has to be very sharply distinguished from the old ethnic tradition.

Devaraja: This is a distinction we are constantly having to make ourselves, particularly in the West.

S: Yes, otherwise we might become an ethnic tradition.

Devaraja: Not if we ensure that in everything we retain and understand that distinction. Because there is always that tendency to lump us with other religions and with religion in general, and to assume that our goals must be the same.

[28]

S: Yes, right. This is again something that I noticed when I was in Helsinki. There was a big conference in Turku, which is the second biggest city, in the old cultural centre, and all the oriental-cum-esoteric groups - the flying saucer people and the Maharishi people and astrologers and palmists and spiritualists and theosophists - they had a big conference. They wanted to form an organization to defend themselves from attacks by anti-religious people, especially Marxists. There is, in a way, a need for this sort of thing. So we were invited to participate, and they wanted me to go along and address the conference. Vajrabodhi and Bodhisri and I discussed it, and in the end we decided that we should not have anything to do with it, because we did not want to be part and parcel of that whole thing. So we remained aloof. There apparently were some quite weird groups represented. I must admit that we sent along a spy, who afterwards reported back. He went along and did a bit of publicity for us, but we were not actually represented, nor did we take any part. They were a very motley crew.

So it is very difficult to know where to classify us or where to put us. Perhaps we should not put ourselves anywhere at all. That is why I say we shouldn't go to these inter-religious conventions and things; we just don't belong there. I have been to some in the past. I have been left with (people) I had nothing in common with. But you can see that they have a lot in common with one another, whether they are Muslim or Hindu or Christian, especially at the clergy level. They could very well belong to the same union. They are in the same line of business. This is definitely the impression I used to get. Their overall attitudes are the same. They are all equally concerned with keeping their flock, preventing their flock from straying, retaining their hold over the younger generation. They all dress in the same way: they have the same suits, the same collars and ties. That is no coincidence. They have got the same educational and social background, whether they be Muslims or Jews or Hindus or whatever. And Buddhists - you know, some of our Friends - also fall into this category (laughter). I felt a complete foreigner, a fish out of water; I felt nothing in common with those people. So we do not want to be lumped together with those various groups.

(However,) you can meet individuals that you can feel very close to, whatever path they may happen to be following. But the religious establishments, though they have a lot in common with one another, despite doctrinal differences, have nothing in common with us nor we with them. Nor do we have much in common with the so-called Buddhist establishment, the

official Buddhism of the embassies and so on. It is all ethnic, nothing really to do with Buddhism. If a Buddhist ambassador invites other ambassadors - Muslim, Christian, Roman Catholic and what not, to attend Wesak celebration, of course they will attend as a diplomatic courtesy. It has nothing to do with any interest in Buddhism, but the foolish Buddhists think that they really are spreading Buddhism because they have got a Muslim ambassador along to their Wesak celebration. That is the level on which they try to operate. It is completely unnecessary and unhelpful. This is what they are doing in Washington - Washington Friends of Buddha - they specialize in that sort of thing. If you have an active Buddhist ambassador, he gets all the other ambassadors together on Wesak day. They all attend your meetings, with their wives, and naturally a few minor officials have to go along in the wake of the ambassadors, so you get the cultural attache or maybe the commercial attache, and so you could gather a hundred people and say, 'We had a quite successful Wesak celebration. A hundred people came, top-level people, all interested in Buddhism.' [29] This is the sort of thing that one is expected to accept as spreading Buddhism in the West.

Unfortunately - to pursue it even more generally - most Eastern Buddhists think in terms of converting the top men and working your way down, whereas we are very definitely thinking of starting at the bottom and possibly working your way up. But they really do think like that: 'We'll get hold of a Minister or a diplomat, and get him along somehow.' They think that is the way to work. It reflects a very old-fashioned type of society, where everybody has to follow the boss, the leader, the chief. As in the time of the Reformation: as the religion of the prince, so the religion of the people - either Catholic or Protestant. If you lived in a Catholic state, you had to be Catholic; if you lived in a Protestant state, you had to be a Protestant. If you wanted to change your religion, you had to change your state. It reflects that sort of mentality. That is how many Eastern Buddhist missionaries - I think that is the term, in a way - think, and try to operate. This is what they tried to do in India until Dr Ambedkar came along and upset everything by starting at the bottom - but in a mass, collective sort of way. I don't know quite what is happening there. No doubt some good is coming out of it. The best thing is just to start with the ordinary individual: add one to one, not think in terms of converting some influential person who will then proceed to convert all the people that he has under his influence. The Maharishi was thinking in this way - convert the Beatles and you'll convert all their fans; get hold of a big pop star and all his following will follow him into your movement. That is just a manipulation of personalities to gain a big following. It has nothing to do with a real spiritual movement.

Devaraja: I saw a little taint of that kind of thing in the last copy of Vajra. It had a picture of Trungpa talking to Mary Hopkin.

S: Oh, yes! I had to think who Mary Hopkin was. Of course, in the East people won't know. I noticed that, and I also thought it was a little taint. But there, we must really watch it. You got (it) in the days of the Buddha. There is a very interesting example when Siha(?), who is described as a general of the King, the commander of the forces, is so impressed by the Buddha's teaching that he wants to Go for Refuge. So the Buddha says, 'Look, you are a quite important person, and many people follow your example. You should consider very carefully before you take this step. Don't do it on a momentary impulse.' And he was quite surprised. He said, 'Lord, if any other teacher had been in this position and I had wanted to become his follower, he would have taken me round the city proclaiming with drum and with trumpet that General Siha had become a follower. This makes me all the more sure that I should become your follower.'

This may point to the contemporary practice. If a prominent man became a follower of a particular sect, he was paraded round the city and they beat drums to announce the fact, but the Buddha didn't. You see the difference, right from the beginning. But, unfortunately, later Buddhists did not follow that tradition. I remember an occasion when I turned up at Sarnath for a big festival, and there was a big programme. They had a puja inaugurated each day by someone important, in a worldly sense, but they had not been able to find enough important people, so various days were left blank. But it said, in Hindi, that on those other days the puja would invariably be inaugurated by a minister in the government or by a maharaja, so you could be sure of getting your money's [30] worth, whichever day you came along. That was so crude and blatant. This really has to be watched.

So, start from the bottom - that is much better - and work your way up from that if you can. From this point of view, I am really pleased that we may well have a centre in Bethnal Green, rather than in Knightsbridge or Hampstead. Even the Sangha Trust people, when they started the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, thought of Hampstead as the intellectual, 'with it' area - 'Have the vihara in Hampstead'. But those people never came. I found that when I was there. Hampstead intellectuals did not come along to the vihara. We didn't catch the fish that we spread the net for. Other people came. And the Chiswick vihara used to be at Knightsbridge. They chose that area deliberately because it was a so-called high-class area. But it was the wrong approach. For financial reasons, they were driven out to the wilds of Chiswick, which was probably better, more genuine, but they would still be in Knightsbridge if they could afford it. It is quite good that we are in Bethnal Green, not because we can't afford Knightsbridge - which no doubt we can't - we can hardly afford Bethnal Green - (Chuckles.)

_: Well, don't speak too soon, please.

S: I am not, I keep my fingers crossed. But it is good that we are there. It is good that you are surrounded by quite ordinary, working-class people, who may be a bit put off by something oriental. That is quite good, not a bad thing at all. You are more likely to get genuine support, in the long run, there than at either Hampstead or Knightsbridge.

There is a great temptation to rely for the spread of your so-called individual ideals on non-individual action or collective action. You get the same sort of thing in the Gospels, where Christ is tempted by the devil to do things by force with the devil's help. The devil promises him all the kingdoms of the earth, and it looks so easy. He resisted the temptation - but the Popes didn't, unfortunately! It is so easy to compromise.

Sona: Is the bodhi tree a banyan tree?

S: It's the ficus religiosa, botanically speaking, which is the peepul, not the banyan.

Sona: Because at one point (it is described as) a banyan.

S: I am not sure whether that is peepul in the original or asvata or what it is.

: There is actually a banyan tree near Bodh-gaya. I went there. It is supposed to be the very tree under which the Buddha sat and meditated. Maybe it was on that particular spot.

: Is it the same one?

S: Yes, it would be the Ajapala banyan tree. Ajapala is 'goatherd's'. I don't remember the Pali term for that particular tree.

Subhuti: (Perhaps he was) wandering around the grounds, sitting under different trees in the area.

[31]

S: The very early accounts in the Vinaya-pitaka don't mention anything about sitting under a tree, only sitting on the bank of the river, but the assumption is that it was under a tree. It would be the sensible place to sit (in the heat). It was in the forest.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove, at the Squirrels' Feeding-ground. Now on that occasion the venerable Kassapa the Great was staying at Figtree Grotto, being sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease. Later on the venerable Kassapa the Great rose up from that sickness. On doing so this thought occurred to him: What if I were to enter Rajagaha for alms-quest ? Thereupon as many as five hundred devas eagerly busied themselves about the alms-food of the venerable Kassapa the Great. But the venerable Kassapa the Great rejected their services, and robing himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe and entered Rajagaha by way of the streets where dwelt the poor and needy, the weavers' quarter. Now the Exalted One saw the venerable Kassapa the Great questing for alms in that quarter. Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Who hath none else to keep, who is unknown, Who is subdued and fixed in the core, In whom the cankers are destroyed, the taints spewed forth, - 'tis him I call a brahmana."

S: So in this verse or udana, we have another definition of the brahmin. We are still concerned with that topic. We notice also at the beginning that the scene again shifts to Rajagaha or Rajgir, which was the capital of the kingdom of Magadha. The Bamboo Grove was situated outside the gates and we can still see the site of it. Kassapa was one of the leading disciples, and he was especially famous for his practice of asceticism. He lived a very austere and simple life, even more simple and austere than that of the other disciples.

In this section this is the first time that the devas make their appearance - that is to say, taking it literally, the gods, beings inhabiting higher planes of existence than the human but still subject to birth and death and rebirth, all still on the Wheel of Life. 'As many as five hundred devas eagerly busied themselves about the alms-food of the venerable Kassapa the Great.' What do you think that means?

In quite a few parts of the Pali Canon, you get the impression or even the picture of crowds of devas hovering round the Buddha and the monks, eager to listen, to be of service or to help. So if you don't choose to take it literally you have to give some sort of meaning to it. It is as though there are all sorts of influences - subtle or what are sometimes called psychic influences, or even powers - around, in the air or the atmosphere or within the field of the Buddha's aura or the aura of the disciples. And these are quite capable of sparking off events, or one can even manipulate them, get things done by them [32] or through them. But Kassapa rejects that possibility. He could, as it were, get food by magical means, but he does not choose to do so. He chooses to go and beg in the poorest quarter of the city. That seems to be the suggestion. He rejects anything out of the way, anything extraordinary. He just keeps on

the ordinary human level, even though he has been ill; he just goes off to beg in the ordinary way and chooses the poorest quarter.

: Is it suggested that if you used that psychic power you would find yourself in some way (subject to that power)?

S: If you take it that Kassapa is an arhant and is considered to be that, that possibility does not arise. He could have used those powers without any danger. But still he does not do so - maybe to set a good example, who knows? He does not invoke the magical or miraculous. Though he is Enlightened, he remains on the ordinary human level and does things in the ordinary human way. Also he seeks out that part of the city where the poor and the needy dwell - the weavers, who were a low-caste community, according to the orthodox Hindu system. In other words, he rejects the devas and goes among the poorest and most despised of human beings. Perhaps that has a more general significance.

The devas also, especially the devas of the lower planes, stand as it were for the aesthetic - almost as an object of sensuous enjoyment, indulgence. So in a way it is a rejection of the superficial aesthetic. He doesn't dally with the devas, who are only a little higher than the ordinary human level. He doesn't play around with these supranormal forces, or influences, or powers, or presences. He does not want very much to do with them at all. He isn't interested. Kassapa used to live alone in the forest much of the time, and perhaps one could say that he did not even care for the company of devas.

The Buddha sees this and sees him going for alms in that quarter, and he gives utterance to this udana:

'Who hath none else to keep,'-

or look after, care for, or nourish; that is what the original word means ...

'who is unknown'-

This is quite interesting. The footnote gives the original Pali word - annatan - unknown, not known to anybody. What do you think this means?

_: ... brahmin.

S: Doesn't leave a mark.

Devaraja: Not able to be known.

S: Yes, can't really be fathomed. The devas certainly can't know him, because they are not Enlightened. The Buddha knows him because the Buddha is the Buddha, but who else can know him? To others he is unknown. In the Sutta-Nipata, the Buddha says that the Enlightened [33] One is like the great ocean, he can't be fathomed, he is unfathomable. This applies to the arhant, too. It applies to Kassapa. He can't be known. It is not simply that the ignorant weaver folk don't appreciate him, but no worldly person could know him because he has gone beyond their range. This is a characteristic of the real brahmin. He is unknown, he is in fact unknowable to others who are not on that level. They can't understand him, can't

fathom him.

'Who is subdued and fixed in the core'.

'The core' is sare, which is also sometimes translated as the essence or pith. It is sometimes translated in the Dhammapada, where the word also occurs, as 'the real'. There is an antithesis in the first chapter of the Dhammapada between sare and asare, which is usually translated as 'the real and the unreal'. He who knows the real as the real goes to the real, but he who does not know real as the real, who mistakes the unreal for the real, does not go to the real, he does not attain the real. Maybe translating it as 'the real' is a bit too metaphysical. It is literally 'pith', the essence.

For instance, in Pali they talk about the trunk of the tree, the wood, as distinct from the bark. The wood as distinct from the bark is called the sare or the pith, not the bark, the inner part, the substance, the essence. So sare represents the essence of the matter or the real substance, as it were. Not in a metaphysical sense. 'Core' is not bad as a translation. The brahmin is one who is fixed in the core - established at the centre of things, in what is really substantial, not in the superficial.

So it does not have a metaphysical or technical meaning here, but a quite straightforward meaning. Maybe 'essential' is the best translation. He is one who is established in what is essential and who sees what is essential, knows what is essential, has realized what is essential and takes his stand firmly on that; who bases himself on the essential. This is what a brahmin is.

'In whom the cankers are destroyed'.

The 'cankers' are the asravas, or asavas, the taints, the defilements, the klesas.

'Spewed forth, - 'tis him I call a brahmana.'

Probably these terms 'cankers' and 'taints' are not used in their later, technical sense of the three of this and the ten of that and so on, but in a very general psycho-spiritual sense.

So a brahmin, the Buddha says in this description, is someone who doesn't have to look after anybody else, that is, in the way of ordinary human attachment and involvement; 'who is unknown' - who has reached such a pitch of spiritual development that he cannot be fathomed by others who are not on that level. 'Who is subdued': who has himself fully under control and who takes his stand firmly upon what is essential in life, not upon what is inessential, and who has got rid of all imperfections as represented by such terms as 'the cankers' or 'the taints', who has got rid of them all. A very strong term is used: who has 'spewed them forth', vomited them up. In other words, [34] he has an utter revulsion against them. This idiom of 'spewing forth' and vomiting is quite strong in Pali literature and tradition. Have you noticed this or come across it? (Murmurs of assent.) It is literally a sort of vomiting because there is such a revulsion against certain things - aspects of yourself or even your old self - that you just feel like vomiting it all up, really getting rid of it.

In the Vajrayana context, the figure of Vajrasattva stands, among other things, for this - this spewing up or vomiting forth, and in that way cleansing oneself. This is one reason why,

when people do the Vajrasattva practice, they quite often have sensations of spewing and vomiting, quite strongly, and dreams of vomiting up all sorts of faecal matter and so on. Even people who are just into ordinary spiritual life and meditation sometimes have this sense of vomiting and spewing up, even quite physically - a sort of nausea. It is the somatic concomitant of trying to get rid of certain things within yourself - you feel it so strongly that you even experience it as a sort of physical sensation of vomiting. That is why we have this idiom that the brahmin is one who has completely spewed up the taints, who has vomited them forth.

... reference to Devadatta?

S: Ah, he spewed up blood.

: Yes, but he was ...

S: Spewed out of the Order, yes, that is true. It is also used generally about spewing out or spewing up the unworthy member, yes.

Devaraja: (It is a) very drastic simile.

S: It is, it's a very strong image indeed and very down to earth. The brahmin, in the Buddha's sense, is one in whom the spewing-up process has been completed. He has spewed up the whole of the samsara. He has spewed up the whole of mundane existence. He has spewed up even the heavens. In Ceylon - this is perhaps a bit extreme - they have excavated monasteries from a very early period, (including) the urinals of the monasteries, and the urinals are decorated, just where the monks would be urinating, with sculptures of Indra's heaven with all its pleasures, so that when the monks go to the urinal they quite literally urinate on Indra's heaven and all its pleasures, which is much the same sort of thing. It is a constant reminder. There is Indra, there are all the nymphs, pink feet and all, and a good monk urinates on them every day. (Laughter.)

I think, in a way, this image is better, because what you spew up was, to start with, a part of yourself. If you urinate on Indra and the nymphs, that is something outside you, which may possibly lead to somewhat negative feelings of contempt and so on, but in the case of the image of spewing up you don't have that; you spew up the contents of your own stomach, psychological or spiritual - something which is already a part of you. You get rid of it. You purge yourself of it.

So the Buddha says, 'tis him I call a brahmana'. Are there any queries on this bit? (Pause.) It is still very untechnical language used in describing the brahmin - the ideal man.

[35]

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Patali, at Ajakalapa Shrine, the abode of the yakkha Ajakalapa. Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated in the open air on a night of inky darkness and the sky god was raining drop by drop. Then the yakkha Ajakalapa, wishing to inspire the Exalted One with fear and consternation and raising of the hair, came up to the Exalted One, and having done so thrice raised near the Exalted One his hullabaloo, saying, " There's a goblin for you, recluse!" But the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

When he hath reached the goal in all things that are his, The brahmin is beyond this goblin with his din."

(Some laughter.) S: 'Goblin' is supposed to translate yakkha. But what is a yakkha, or yaksha? A sort of demon, but also more like a daimon, in the Greek sense. It is a very powerful natural force, a sort of spirit. It is interesting that the Buddha himself, in the Pali, is sometimes called yakkha, and the early images of the Buddha, according to some authorities, are modelled upon yakkha images - very sturdy, powerful figures. The Mathura-type Buddha is supposed to be modelled upon the image of the yakkha as current at that time.

So you get an impression of the scene: the Buddha was staying at Patali, which seems to have been a village, 'at the Ajakalapa Shrine, the abode of the yakkha Ajakalapa'. Shrine is caitya. It is not quite a shrine in our modern sense. Any sacred or sanctified spot or place was called a caitya. There need not be a building. Caitya is usually derived from a word meaning 'to heap up', so it's a sort of heap or stones or something heaped up and regarded as a shrine. It may be just a tree or group of trees with coloured threads tied around them or a few stones put on top of one another, such as you often get in India today. I think you know the sort of thing. And local tradition or local belief associates that particular tree, spot or heap of stones with some spirit, some presence or force. And very often offerings are made. In some of those spots there may be a quite strange atmosphere.

So, in the Buddha's day, as still in India, there were these little folk shrines to various spirits, yakkhas and other, all over the countryside. Sometimes there were little huts and shelters, rude shrines in our sense, and sometimes the Buddha used to stay in those spots. We quite often hear that the Buddha put up at such-and-such shrine. It is not always clear whether there was a building which he occupied or whether he just stayed in the neighbourhood of a particular tree that was a caitya or a heap of stones that was a caitya. But certainly we often find him at, in or near a caitya. We often find, also, that he has something to do with the spirit - deva or yakkha - that is associated, in the popular mind at least, with that spot.

We can well imagine the scene. The Buddha was staying at Patali at this caitya, which was believed to be the abode, the dwelling place, of this yakkha, this spirit. The Buddha was sitting there one night in the open air, and it was pitch dark. There was no moon; the sky was [36] inky; it was black. Rain was falling. 'The sky god was raining' - that is just an idiom, just as we say 'it rained', without there being any 'it'. The Pali idiom is deva v... - the god rained, for 'it rained'; 'raining drops'.

Then this spirit wished to frighten the Buddha. You could say that it was a situation, in view of the associations of the place, in which an ordinary man staying there on a very dark night with rain falling would have been afraid. But the Buddha was not afraid. The actual text goes much further than that and says that the yakkha raised a great disturbance, a hullabaloo. According to the commentary, he was called ajakalapa - aja meaning goat, because he sometimes tried to frighten people by bleating like a goat. I personally feel he might have been called Ajakalapa because of some association with the sacrifice of a goat, but that is just a guess.

But on hearing this noise at this fearsome spot, where a yakkha was supposed to dwell, the Buddha did not become afraid at all, and simply said, or 'expired', this utterance:

'When he hath reached the goal in all things that are his, The brahmin is beyond this goblin with his din' ...

the yakkha - he is not disturbed by these powerful natural forces, whatever disturbances come.

Sometimes we feel as though the little episodes had been almost manufactured to explain the lines. I feel that a little here, but it could well have happened. But the yakkha appears again and again in Buddhist literature - in Mahayana literature also. He represents powerful natural forces which are not necessarily harmful. They may be beneficent too. They are neutral. Sometimes they function in a helpful, sometimes in a harmful, way. The Buddha himself is sometimes hailed as the Great yakkha or yaksha because he impressed ordinary people as like a spirit. They could not understand him, could not fathom him. He appeared here and appeared there - very strange and mysterious, rather awe-inspiring, like a spirit, like a daimon, with something uncanny about him.

This brings something to mind. We must not forget that the Buddha and his disciples, in those early days, spent the greater part of their time out of doors, even in the forest. The whole of northern India in those days was covered with dense jungle, and there were villages, and a few towns, here and there in the midst of the jungle and little paths leading through the jungle from one village to another or from the village to the town. We do not, in those days, find the whole of that great Gangetic basin under cultivation, as it is today. That great expanse of jungle is called, in the Pali text, the Mahabangla, the great forest or great jungle. So we must not forget that the Buddha and his disciples spent the greater part of their time in the open air among the trees and in contact with nature - much more in contact with nature than with other human beings. So you can well imagine that the monk, or wanderer as he was called then, was staying most of the time in the forest, in a little hut maybe or under a tree, or in a cave, and going to the nearest village once a day for alms, often not saying anything, and then coming back and sitting under a tree, spending the whole day under a tree surrounded by nature and by vegetation, sometimes very deep in the forest. If he was practising meditation, he would become very sensitive. He might pick up all sorts of influences, feelings. He might even feel that the tree [37] was speaking to him or a voice was coming from it.

In this way we get in the Pali Canon many little stories of monks staying in the forest, and 'then a tree god spoke to him'. If we remember these things, we can understand what it really means. Not that, in a crude, literal sense, a god appeared before him and spoke to him; but there he was in the midst of the trees and could feel something coming from all the living things around him. He was reflecting or meditating, and in the midst of it all it was as though a voice came. Even a teaching would come sometimes, a reminder to him, even an encouragement to get on with his meditation, seeming to come from a tree, a shrub or even a stone - but usually from a living thing, a tree: a rukhdeva, a tree god or spirit. We get a lot of this as the background of the teaching in the Pali Canon, the very intimate connection between the monks and nature. This is not insisted upon or described in great detail, but it is there in the background all the time. So we must bear in mind that most of these teachings originated in these sort of circumstances. Not in buildings or monasteries - there weren't any monasteries then - but in little huts or shacks put up in someone's garden or park, or just a residence at the foot of a tree. Most of the time, therefore, the monks were in close contact with nature and (were) very susceptible, in their heightened state of consciousness, to any influence coming from nature.

One could say, to put it crudely, that there is a strongly animistic background to early Buddhism, in a healthy and positive way. The monks were literally in close contact with nature all the time, but they did not romanticise it or idealize it as people sometimes do today, because it was the natural background of their lives and practice, the teaching.

'When he hath reached the goal in all things that are his'.

That is a rather ambiguous phrase, but the general meaning seems clear. In other words, when he has reached his goal in all the things that concern him as an individual, the brahmin is beyond this sort of (thing). In other words, the Buddha's attitude towards the yakkha's hullabaloo is rather contemptuous. He is not bothered by it at all. It does not mean anything to him.

Sometimes you do find, here and there in different parts of the earth, spots where there seems to be a strongly negative or strongly positive influence. For this reason, people who are sensitive to these things start up little shrines and cults and worship spirits in those spots. Maybe the caitya had something to do with that; maybe there was an unpleasant atmosphere in that particular place. But the Buddha was not disturbed by it. Maybe there actually was a yakkha, a quite literal thing. We mustn't rule out that possibility, too. But the main moral is that the Buddha was not disturbed.

: ... assumption, taking it very literally, that

a yakkha ... by interpreting ...

S: Yes. (Long pause.)

:I was just looking out of my room. I looked back and suddenly realized I had seen an apparition of a smiling young man standing there... quite beneficent.

S: Maybe there was a deva hovering around you and keeping a watchful [38] eye on you. Devas, in the Pali Canon, often keep an eye on the monks and exhort them to get on with their meditation when they happen to backslide, or approve them when they are getting on with it well. Sometimes these devas are the reborn deceased relatives of the monk, who are reborn in heaven as devas and are watching over him, encouraging and helping him in various ways. This is quite common.

If you take this section in the most general sense, it pertains, of course, to the conquest of fear, that the brahmin or the Buddha - the Enlightened One - is fearless. Whatever may be the occasion of possible feelings of fear, he doesn't experience them.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. On that occasion the venerable Sangamaji had come to Savatthi to see the Exalted One. Now she who was aforesaid the mate of Sangamaji heard it said: 'They say master Sangamaji has come to Savatthi.' So she took her boy and came to Jeta Grove. Now on that occasion the venerable Sangamaji was seated at the root of a certain tree for noonday rest. Then she who was aforesaid the mate of the venerable Sangamaji came towards him, drew near and said this: 'Recluse, support me with our little child.'"

S (interrupting): The word which is used here for 'support' is the same word that, in a previous section, was translated as 'keep', where it says that the brahmin has no one else to keep. The word is *posa*. He is *anannaposin*, he has nobody other than himself to keep, look after, cherish. That is what she is asking for on behalf of herself and the child - support, care, nourishment, looking after.

"At these words the venerable Sangamaji was silent. So a second time and yet a third time she who was aforesaid the mate of the venerable Sangamaji repeated her words, and a third time also the venerable Sangamaji was silent. Thereupon she set down the child in front of the venerable Sangamaji and went away, saying, 'There's your child, recluse! Support him!' But the venerable Sangamaji neither looked at the child nor spoke to him. And she, when she had gone some distance, looked back and saw that the venerable Sangamaji neither looked at the child nor spoke to him. On seeing that, this thought occurred to her: This recluse needs not even his child. So she turned back, took up the child and went away. Now the Exalted One with the deva-sight, purified and more than that of humans, beheld such rudeness as this on the part of the former mate of Sangamaji, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

He joys not at her coming, he grieves not when she goes. Sangamaji bond-free, - such call I brahmana."

[39]

S: There is a little pun there. The name Sangamaji means 'free from bonds'. The Buddha is saying that he really is Sangamaji - he really is free from bonds and is living up to his name.

It is interesting here that there is a complete difference of values as compared with modern times, in that the former spouse of Sangamaji is considered to be guilty of rudeness in trying to force herself and her child on Sangamaji after he has become a recluse or *sramana*, whereas the modern view usually would be that Sangamaji is very rude in not taking them back, or at least taking some notice of them.

Devaraja: Would that have been the current attitude at that time? Would it have been rudeness on her part?

S: Certainly in religious circles or among those who respected or upheld the ideal of the *sramana*.

Devaraja: In present-day society, do you think her point of view would be valid?

S: Why do you say 'in present-day society'?

Devaraja: I mean in these days, in twentieth-century Britain, would her demand be valid?

S: It would probably be less valid than then, in a way, because in twentieth-century Britain a woman with a child is not likely to be left totally without support, even if it comes from the state, whereas in those days there was not that sort of security, though there was the security of the extended family.

You notice her phrase, 'This recluse needs not even his child'. It is very significant that she

uses the word 'needs'; that he does not need even his child. You notice that she does not say, 'He doesn't need even me.' First of all, she appeals for support for herself and the child. When he does not respond, she just leaves the child. Even that does not move him. Then she says that he does not need even his child. What does this suggest? (Pause.) That, normally, the child would be even more important than the wife - an even bigger bond, or an even bigger temptation to come back. Why do you think that is?

: Because sons were regarded as the furtherance(?) ...

S: Yes, the son is the extension of the father, and sometimes the son was regarded as the father reborn - as sharing a part of the soul of the father. This attachment to the son was very strong in Hindu society - perhaps in all primitive societies. Also, the Hindu belief was that if you didn't leave behind you a son to make offerings to your spirit after your death, you would not go to heaven. That was a very strong belief. That is why all orthodox Hindus, and especially brahmins, want to leave sons. That was the old ideology. You had to leave a son, preferably several, because if the oldest son died the next in order of seniority could take on the responsibility. It was considered to be a terrible thing to die without issue. The Chinese had the same sort of idea. There then would be no one to make offerings to your spirit - and not only your spirit but the spirits of the ancestors for seven generations back after your death - so you had to leave a son. Thus the son was very important, [40] in many ways more important than the wife.

So if a man had surmounted even the attachment to his son, he was free indeed. The ultimate attachment was not to wife, it was to son, for the ancient Indians. Sangamaji is shown to be free even from that. When the son and the wife together cannot move him, she thinks, 'Maybe just the child,' so she puts the child down and goes away. But even the child by himself - and it is a boy; it would probably not be worth trying with a girl, because girls do not perform that function in such communities - even the sight of his son cannot (move him). Indeed, he does not even look. Then she realizes that he has no attachment to anything. He does not need anything. He does not even need his son.

You can read a deeper meaning into it, because if he is Enlightened, why does he need to bother about heaven? He does not need a son to help him get there and to make offerings to him after he is dead. He has gone beyond heaven. He does not need a son. He has transcended all the old ethnic values. He is an Enlightened individual.

The contemporary view would be that he was very selfish. No doubt there is a form of taking up the religious life which is selfish and not as the result of any real idealism, but it certainly is not the Buddhist view that you can't leave in that way if you really feel the spiritual urge. But obviously it must be a spiritual urge and not just a shelving of responsibilities for unspiritual or even anti-spiritual reasons. It is that you have to ascertain within your own mind before you take any active steps.

So the Buddha says of him;

'He joys not at her coming, he grieves not when she goes.'

There is an interesting discrepancy there between the verse and the prose text. Presumably the Buddha includes her with her son. In the Dhammapada the Buddha gives as the

characteristics of the spiritually immature person that he says 'puttham matthi' - 'this son is mine' and then 'this wealth is mine', 'pannam matthi'. So puttha, the son, comes first, and the spiritually immature person thinks, 'This son is mine; this is my son'. It suggests that he has that attachment to his own mundane individuality and its extension in his son. That is regarded, it seems, as an even stronger attachment on the part of the spiritually immature person, the bala, than attachment to riches, possessions, wealth. In that same Dhammapada verse, the Buddha says, 'He does not even belong to himself' not to speak of possessing a son or possessing wealth.

Devaraja: Why is 'deva-sight' mentioned there?

S: It means clairvoyant vision. The Buddha was not within the range of ordinary human sight, but saw it happening at a distance by his clairvoyant vision. That is what 'deva-sight' means. Dibya-cakkhu - divine sight rather than deva-sight; divine or clairvoyant vision. The footnote gives an extract from the Commentary: where the text says: 'Thereupon she set down the child in front of the venerable Sangamaji and went away', the Commentary, according to the footnote, 'thinks she could not stand within the radiance of the recluse', and the translator has added an exclamation mark. Perhaps he finds this rather difficult to believe.

[41]

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Gaya, on Gaya Head. Now on that occasion a great number of ascetics, on the cold winter nights between the eighths in time of snowfall, were plunging up and down [in the water] and sprinkling and burning sacrifice, thinking: This way comes purity. Now the Exalted One saw that great number of ascetics so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Not by water is one pure, tho' many folk bathe here. In whom is truth and dhamma, he is pure and he's a brahmin."

S: This takes place at another site: 'near Gaya, on Gaya Head'. That is very near the present Gaya railway station, which is about twelve miles from Buddhagaya. Gaya Head is a sort of peak, and there is still a quite famous Hindu temple there. It seems to have been a sort of sacred spot. This is the same place to which the Buddha led his disciples after he had converted the Kassapa brothers, who were fire worshippers, and where he preached - if that is the right term - the Fire Sermon. That was on this same Gaya Head or Gaya Peak. It is just a low hill. You notice that the weather in those days in India seems to have been a bit different. I don't think there would be snow there at present in the winter. Apparently 2,500 years ago there was, which is rather interesting. There was much more vegetation, of course; I don't know whether that has anything to do with it.

'On that occasion a great number of ascetics' - that is, non-Buddhist ascetics, sramanas - 'on the cold winter nights between the eighths' the eighth day before and the eighth day after the full moon - 'in time of snowfall were plunging up and down (in the water)' - there is a river there in which they were plunging - 'and sprinkling' - sprinkling themselves with water - 'and burning sacrifice' - performing these Vedic homa ceremonies - 'thinking: This way comes purity'. There was a strong belief among many people in India in the Buddha's time that, by means of various ceremonial ablutions and making burnt offerings, purity could be attained. The word sramana, which is translated 'recluse' or 'ascetic' here, is traditionally interpreted as

one who is pure, washed. So sometimes the Buddha says that the real sramana is not one who simply washes or bathes. The Buddha 'saw that great number of ascetics so doing, and ... seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'Not by water is one pure, tho' many folk bathe here. In whom is truth and dhamma, he is pure and he's a brahmin.'

(break in recording) giving his ethical and spiritual definition of who is a brahmin. A brahmin, ascetic or holy man is not simply one who engages in merely external ceremonial practices or who believes that purity can come about by bathing in this way. But this sort of belief is still very common in India today. You still find people bathing in the waters of the Ganges and believing that this has some sort of spiritual benefit.

[42]

Devaraja: Why 'truth and dhamma'?

S: These two often come together. We must not think that truth is definitely truth and dhamma is definitely dhamma. They are a linked pair; they are associated. It is difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins.

Devaraja: What would be the word translated as 'truth'? Would it be satya?

S: Satya in Pali. Not truth in the sense of simply speaking the truth, but the truth and integrity of one's whole life.

Devaraja: That would imply personal truth and integrity, and dhamma would imply an insight into the nature of Reality, or what?

S: Possibly, but, as I said, we often get this pair; for instance in the Dhammapada. One could say 'who is true and righteous' or 'in whom is truth and righteousness'. Dharma perhaps suggests being in accordance with an objective moral and spiritual law or principle. 'Truth' perhaps suggests being true more to yourself, but I offer that only as a suggestion. There is nothing very clear-cut. Perhaps 'truth' represents the more subjective and dharma the more objective aspect of the spiritual attainment. Within you are true and without you conform to the Dharma; it is possibly a bit like that.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. On that occasion Bahiya of the Bark Garment was staying at Supparaka on the seashore, being esteemed, honoured, thought much of, worshipped and with deference paid to him, and he got plenty of robes and alms-food, bed and seat, comforts and medicines for sickness. Now consideration arose in the mind of Bahiya of the Bark Garment thus: I wonder whether I am one of those who in the world are arahants or have attained the arahant path."

S: Let us take this bit by bit; it is longer than any of the previous sections.

Here is the Buddha staying at Savatthi or Sravasti, in north-western India, at the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park, where he often stayed and spent, I think it was, twenty-four rainy seasons after his Enlightenment. And 'on that occasion' - at that time - 'Bahiya' - Bahiya

meaning the outsider, almost like the foreigner - 'of the Bark Garment was staying at Supparaka on the seashore.' Supparaka has recently been excavated and identified. It is north of Bombay. There is a Buddhist vihara there now. In those days it was a great port and emporium, with trade connections with Babylonia, so I have sometimes speculated that this Bahiya might even have been from there or had something to do with Babylonian [43] or Sumerian religion. He is described as 'of the Bark Garment', though I am not sure what that means - why he should wear a garment of bark, or what a garment of bark is. Perhaps it is a linen garment. When we were in New Zealand I saw some bark garments in museums. There is a bark of a tree there which can be used almost like a weave. It is quite strange - very thin. But I have never heard of anything like that in India. So I have a suspicion that Bahiya might have been from Babylonia or had connections there or was connected with some sort of cult there.

Subhuti: I remember a list describing some of the Buddhist austerities. One of them was to wear a garment of bark. It seemed to be a description of a practice of a particular sect, almost.

S: The Egyptian priests wore linen, and I think the Babylonians did too, so I am just wondering whether it had any ritual significance of that kind. Also, if you wear bark, that is a non-animal product, isn't it? Some of the priesthoods in the ancient world did believe in wearing garments which were not of animal origin, representing a sort of ritual purity.

So Bahiya seems to have been a sort of teacher, a spiritual leader. He lived on the seashore at Supparaka, 'being esteemed, honoured, thought much of, worshipped and with deference paid to him, and he got plenty of robes and alms-food, bed and seat, comforts and medicines for sickness.' Whoever compiled this section is thinking of Bahiya very much as an Indian ascetic, with robes and bowl and so on, but he may well have been something quite different from that. He may have been following some non-Indian cult. Anyway, it is interesting that this consideration arose in his mind: "I wonder whether I am one of those who in the world are arahants or have attained the arahant path."

The word 'arahant' here cannot be used, surely, in the later technical sense, because how would Bahiya be able to reflect like that? He apparently knew nothing about the Buddha's teaching. He had never heard of the Buddha before, as we shall see. Therefore, we can probably conclude that he thought along these lines: 'What good is all this doing me? Have I really made any progress? Am I really developing?' But he would naturally have expressed that in terms of his own faith or tradition, as he then followed or professed it. Anyway, a certain dissatisfaction or doubt arose whether he in fact was a spiritually developed person. Even though he was regarded as a spiritual leader by the people of that locality, this doubt arose in his mind.

"Then a devata who was formerly a blood-relation of Bahiya of the Bark Garment, out of compassion and desire for his welfare, knowing with his own mind the consideration of his mind, came to where he was and said this to Bahiya of the Bark Garment: 'Bahiya, neither are you arahant nor have you reached the arahants' path. Yours is not that course by which you could be arahant or reach the arahants' path.' 'But,' asked Bahiya, 'who in the world with its devas are arahants or have reached the arahants' path?' 'There is a town, Bahiya, in the far-off districts named Savatthi. There now dwells that Exalted One who is arahant, a rightly awakened One. He indeed, Bahiya, is arahant and teaches dhamma for reaching arahantship.' [44] Then Bahiya of the Bark Garment, stirred by that devata, left Supparaka, and, staying

only a single night throughout the journey, came to where the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park."

S: He did not stay in any place in the course of his journey more than a single night, he was so eager to get there. It does not mean that he stayed only a single night anywhere in the course of the whole journey.

"Now on that occasion a great number of monks were walking about in the open air. Then Bahiya of the Bark Garment went up to them and said this to those monks: 'Pray, sirs, where now is the Exalted One dwelling, he who is arahant, a rightly awakened One? We are desirous of seeing that arahant who is a rightly awakened One.' 'The Exalted One, Bahiya, has gone among the houses in quest of alms-food.' Thereupon Bahiya of the Bark Garment turned about hastily, left Jeta Grove and entered Savatthi, where he saw the Exalted One going about Savatthi in quest of alms-food; comely he was, goodly to look upon, with senses calmed, tranquil of mind, in full attainment of composure by masterly control, (like) a tamed, alert, perfectly trained elephant. On seeing him he went up to the Exalted One, fell with his head at his feet and said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, let the Exalted One teach me dhamma! Let the Wellfarer teach me dhamma, such as may be to my profit and happiness for a long time!' At these words the Exalted One said this to Bahiya of the Bark Garment: 'You come unseasonably, Bahiya. We have entered in quest of alms-food.' Then a second time Bahiya of the Bark Garment said this to the Exalted One: 'This thing, sir, is hard to know, the danger to the span of life of the Exalted One and myself. Let the Exalted One teach me dhamma! Let the Wellfarer teach me dhamma, such as may be to my profit and happiness for a long time!' Then a second time the Exalted One said: 'You come unseasonably, Bahiya. We have entered in quest of alms-food.' Then yet a third time Bahiya of the Bark Garment said to the Exalted One: 'This thing, sir, is hard to know, the danger to the span of life of the Exalted One and myself. Let the Exalted One teach me dhamma! Let the Wellfarer teach me dhamma, such as may be to my profit and happiness for a long time!'"

S: Let us deal with this. Bahiya is told that in the far-off district of Savatthi the Buddha dwells. We may take it quite literally that a deva did tell him, or that somehow some sort of rumour reached him from some unknown source, as it were, that there was what was called an Enlightened Being living in that town, so many hundreds of miles away. So he goes there and is so eager to arrive and see the Buddha that he does not stay overnight anywhere more than one night. He presses on until he gets [45] to Savatthi and the Jeta Grove, and just sees a lot of monks walking up and down in the open air. He asks them where the Buddha is, and they tell him that he has gone for alms-food into the town among the houses. So Bahiya follows him, and then he sees the Buddha: 'comely he was, goodly to look upon, with senses calmed, tranquil of mind, in full attainment of composure by masterly control, like a tamed, alert, perfectly trained elephant.' This comparison of the Buddha to an elephant is quite common in Pali literature, especially the tamed elephant, because there is tremendous strength but it is perfectly under control - tamed, subdued.

There are four beasts to which the Buddha is regularly compared in the Pali Canon. First of all, he is compared to the lion. He is called Nara-singha - the lion man or the lion among men. Then he is compared to the bull: Nara-punghava, the bull among men or the bull man. Then he is compared to the serpent or dragon - Naga - so he is Mahanaga, the great serpent, the great dragon. And also he is compared to the elephant, which is also Naga. The Buddha is never compared to the horse, as far as I recollect, though the horse is a symbol of the Great

Renunciation. The elephant, of course, is a symbol of the Buddha's conception because, according to legend - maybe later legend - the Buddha's mother, before he was born, dreamt that a beautiful white elephant entered her womb. So the elephant is a symbol of the conception, just as the bull is a symbol of the birth because the Buddha was born under the sign of Taurus, the bull - Urisambha. The horse is the symbol of the Renunciation, because he left home on horseback. The lion is the symbol of - I was going to say the preaching, but I try to avoid that word - the enunciation of the Dharma which came unfortunately to be called the first sermon. So there are references throughout to the Buddha as the lion, Singhanada, because he roars out the Truth without fear, just as the lion roars in the forest without fearing other beasts. Just as when the lion roars all the other beasts remain silent, so when the Buddha speaks the Truth, when he gives utterance to the Dharma, all the other lesser teachers remain silent. So these are the four animals associated with these four episodes in the Buddha's life.

Then there are the other four animals, though they overlap to some extent, to which the Buddha was explicitly compared in a symbolic way: the bull, the elephant, the serpent and the lion. The lion seems to emphasize his fearlessness, his proclamation of the Truth. He roars the Truth as the lion roars in the jungle, so the lion stands for fearless, fiery energy. The bull is associated with the earth. It is a very earthy symbol. The bull stands for this very stubborn, strong energy or strength, a sort of earth-rooted strength. The horse, we can say, stands for the more active energy. And the snake, of course, is always a sacred animal because it changes its skin. It is a symbol of the new birth, the new life. It is also a bit mysterious; you don't know where it comes from or where it goes to.

Devaraja: I have read, I think in an extract from the Samyutta-Nikaya, of the Buddha being likened to a lion going through the forest in the middle of the night and roaring. It was a very powerful image because it says that even the elephant can't hold its buttocks closed when it hears the roar of the lion!

S: There is a whole chapter in the Dhammapada about the elephant. The elephant is also a symbol of patience. The Dhammapada says: 'As the elephant in battle bears the arrows at him hurled, one must bear men's [46] bitter tongues, for very evil is the world'. So the elephant is a symbol of patient strength, patient energy. The horse represents more active energy; the lion represents even aggressive energy; the bull, you can say, represents more steadfast energy - the strength of inertia, almost, but raised to a highly spiritual degree; and the elephant represents patient strength, patient energy. It seems that the Buddha, when compared to animals, is compared to animals of this sort. The emphasis is very much upon strength.

Sona: Not to lambs or doves.

S: Not to the lamb, or the dove! Or the pelican!

: There is the comparison with the four evangelic beasts - the lion, the bull, and the serpent-eagle - and the angel-man.

S: There is also the question of the elephant-look. Have you come across that? The Buddha is said to look like an elephant, so how does the elephant look?

: Patient.

S: Yes - but no, it is something technical. The elephant, according to Indian myth or legend, never just turns his head - he always swivels his whole body round. He doesn't have any neck joints. I don't know whether he actually does that or not; I have never observed. But that is the elephant-look, in which you turn the whole body, with the head, and look. So the Buddha always looks as an elephant does: he never turns the head and looks, he turns the whole body or torso and looks. What do you think that means?

: Directness.

S: Directness; also, giving you the whole of his energy and attention; not just with the head, with the whole body. That is quite significant. I don't think the significance of the elephant-look has ever been pointed out - that the force, the power, the energy of the whole body is there, that not just the head is turning and looking but the whole body, the whole being, is giving you his undivided, concentrated attention. He is totally attending. He confronts you completely when he is looking. He doesn't just confront you with his head or his face, but with the whole body. He is all in line, as it were.

Devaraja: It says a lot for the Indian appreciation of the qualities of an Enlightened person that there is that sort of observation. Whereas figures like Christ seem very indefinite, these qualities are so definite and so real, so valuable.

S: The Buddha is not even compared to the deer - though the deer does figure in Pali literature - nor to the tiger. The arhant is of course compared to the rhinoceros and is exhorted to wander by himself, 'even as the horn of the rhinoceros is single'. But the Buddha himself, as far as I recollect, as Buddha, is not ever compared to the rhinoceros or to the tiger. It is to the noble and powerful animals that the Buddha is compared when he is compared at all.

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'Exalted One' is Bhagavan. 'Wellfarer' is Sugata, sometimes translated as 'the Happy One', the one who has gone to a good, a happy state, who has fared well, fared to a happy state.

So Bahiya asks the Buddha to teach him the Dharma and the Buddha says, in effect, that it is not the right time. He is busy. He is in quest of alms-food. But anyway, Bahiya persists. He says, "This thing, sir, is hard to know, the danger to the span of life of the Exalted One and myself." He is saying, as it were: 'You are asking me to wait, but who knows what will happen? If I wait, you may die before you have time to teach me, or I may die before you have time to teach me.' It is interesting, as though he has a premonition that he is going to die for he does die, or is killed, shortly afterwards. Perhaps he is psychic; perhaps he is gifted in this way, because there he was, staying at Supparaka, and he hears this voice, this deva, telling him to go to the Buddha. He has a sort of premonition, it seems, here that he is going to die or that life is short, or is going to be short for him. So he urges upon the Buddha: 'You ask me to wait, maybe only an hour, but who knows whether you or I will live that hour out? So let me have the teaching. It is very urgent.' The second time, the Buddha refuses, but the third time the request is made the Buddha grants it. We often find this in the Pali tradition. If the Buddha is asked something a third time, he replies, however devastating it may be for the person asking the question. So what did he say?

"Then, Bahiya, thus must you train yourself: In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just the imagined, in the cognized just the cognized.

Thus you will have no "thereby." That is how you must train yourself. Now, Bahiya, when in the seen there will be to you just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just the imagined, in the cognized just the cognized, then, Bahiya, as you will have no "thereby," you will have no "therein." As you, Bahiya, will have no "therein," it follows that you will have no "here" or "beyond" or "midway between." That is just the end of Ill.'

Thereupon Bahiya of the Bark Garment, thanks to this concise dhamma-teaching of the Exalted One, by not clinging, thenceforth released his mind from the cankers. So the Exalted One, after admonishing Bahiya with this concise teaching, went away. Now not long after the departure of the Exalted One a young calf attacked Bahiya of the Bark Garment and caused his death. And the Exalted One, after wandering about Savatthi in quest of alms-food, returned from his alms-quest and, after his meal, on leaving the town together with a great number of monks, saw Bahiya of the Bark Garment, who had made an end of life. On seeing him he said to the monks: 'Monks, take up the body of Bahiya of the Bark Garment. Bring a litter, carry it away and burn it and pile a cairn thereon. For, monks, a fellow in the Brahma-life has met his end.' 'Yes, sir,' replied those monks to the Exalted One, and they took up the body, brought a litter, set it thereon [48] and burned it, and when they had piled a cairn they came to the Exalted One, saluted him and sat down at one side. Then as they sat at one side those monks said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, the body of Bahiya of the Bark Garment is burned and a cairn set up. Pray what is his bourn, what is his future destiny?' 'A sage, monks, was Bahiya of the Bark Garment. He went in accordance with dhamma, and he vexed me not in the matter of dhamma-teaching. Bahiya of the Bark Garment, monks, has won utter Freedom.' Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:"

S: Let us leave the verse and go back to Bahiya and to the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha says: 'Then, Bahiya, thus must you train yourself: In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just the imagined, in the cognized just the cognized.' What do you think that means?

: Just awareness.

S: Just awareness, with no unnecessary mental activity. The Buddha says, 'In the seen ... just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just the imagined, in the cognized just the cognized.' It is not that knowledge is excluded - not even really that thinking is excluded; but unnecessary or neurotic thinking is excluded. For instance, supposing you want to go somewhere and you have to think how to get there. You can think: 'How can I get there? First I have to go to the bus stop and get such-and-such a number bus, which will take me so far. Then I can get such-and-such a train, then I will get to my destination.' That is necessary, objective thinking. But if you start worrying, 'Supposing the bus doesn't come? Supposing I get on the wrong bus by mistake? Supposing I forget to take any money with me? Supposing the train is late? Supposing there is no train? Supposing there is a breakdown? Supposing I'm killed?' This is all neurotic thinking, worry. That sort of thinking is excluded. But thinking as such, objective or necessary thinking, is not excluded.

So the Buddha says, 'First of all, just be aware. Just look; just see. Just imagine. Just cognize. Just know, without unnecessary mental activity. Thus you will have no "thereby".' What do you think that means? It is quite obscure.

Sagaramati: No hypothetical situations.

S: No hypothetical situations, it means that.

Subhuti: No speculations.

S: No speculations, no going from one thing to another, no comparisons. Just remaining with what is actually present here and now. Also no samskaras, no karmic consequences. 'That is how you must train yourself.'

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'Now, Bahiya, when in the seen there will be to you just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just the imagined, in the cognized just the cognized, then, Bahiya, as you will have no "thereby", you will have no "therein". As you, Bahiya, will have no "therein", it follows that you will have no "here" or "beyond" or "midway between".'

It is usually said that 'here' refers to this world, 'beyond' to the other world - heaven - and 'in between' to the intermediate state. But this is only an explanation; one can look at it even more profoundly than that. (There should be) no comparison, no going from one thing to another. You are just with what is actually present here and now. 'This is just the end of Ill', the end of dukkha.

Sagaramati: When you said 'no samskaras', you meant not setting up any future karma?

S: Yes, no setting up of any karma which would ripen in the future, because it is on account of samskaras set up in the past that you reap karmic consequences later on. That is the significance of the 'thereby'. You create karma in the past and thereby you reap the consequences in the future. But there is no 'thereby' if you remain simply in the present and are simply aware - if you just look and see, just imagine, just cognize. If you don't set up any samskaras, there will be nothing in the future from those samskaras, nothing which will come about on account of those samskaras, nothing from them. The precise significance of that 'no therein' is not quite clear, but the general sense is quite clear.

'Thereupon Bahiya of the Bark Garment, thanks to this concise dhamma-teaching of the Exalted One, by not clinging'

That is rather significant, perhaps. He doesn't cling, he just sees, he is just aware, he just knows ...

'thenceforth released his mind from the cankers' ...

the asravas ...

'So the Exalted One, after admonishing Bahiya with this concise teaching, went away. Now not long after the departure of the Exalted One a young calf attacked Bahiya of the Bark Garment and caused his death. And the Exalted One, after wandering about Savatthi in quest of alms-food, returned from his alms-quest and, after his meal, on leaving the town together with a great number of monks, saw Bahiya of the Bark Garment, who had made an end of life.'

He saw the body on the ground.

'On seeing him he said to the monks: "Monks, take up the body of Bahiya of the Bark Garment. Bring a litter, carry it away and burn it and pile a cairn thereon.'

'Cairn' is caitya, the heap of stones, or perhaps even a heap of earth, [50] which was the original of the stupa. It was the custom, even before the Buddha's day, to pile up a heap of earth or stones over the ashes of the cremated body of a king, leader or chief or some very revered person, and this was continued by the Buddhists - first of all with regard to some of the disciples of the Buddha, who were cremated and commemorated in that way on the Buddha's instructions, even during the Buddha's own lifetime, and then, after his death, in the case of the Buddha himself. Then, gradually, the caitya or stupa became more and more elaborate and grandiose and assumed certain symbolical values and became the best-known type of Buddhist monument and architectural expression.

So the Buddha orders the monks to cremate the body and erect a primitive stupa over the ashes.

"For, monks, a fellow in the Brahma-life has met his end."

'He is one of you' - sahabrahmachari - 'one who, like you, is following the spiritual life.'

"Yes, sir," - ahme, Bhante - 'replied those monks to the Exalted One, and they took up the body, brought a litter, set it thereon and burned it, and when they had piled a cairn they came to the Exalted One, saluted him and sat down at one side. 'Then as they sat at one side those monks said this to the Exalted one: "'Sir, the body of Bahiya of the Bark Garment is burned and a cairn set up. Pray what is his bourn"' - gati - 'what is his future destiny?'"

Monks were very fond of this question in the Buddha's time. If anyone died, monk or lay disciple, they used to come to the Buddha and say, 'What is his bourn? Where is he being reborn, or is he being reborn at all?' And the Buddha would tell them. Here he says:

"A sage, monks, was Bahiya of the Bark Garment. He went in accordance with dhamma, and he vexed me not in the matter of dhamma-teaching."

How could one vex the Buddha in the matter of dhamma-teaching? By asking unnecessary questions, by disputing and carping and not being very receptive - as some of the people who came to him were.

"Bahiya of the Bark garment, monks, has won utter freedom" ...

parinibbuttho. He is completely, or literally, expired in the spiritual sense; he has gone beyond, gained Nirvana.

'Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift: "Where water, earth, fire, air no footing find, There shine no stars, no sun is there displayed, There gleams no moon; no darkness there is seen. So when the sage, the brahmana, by wisdom, Of his own self hath pierced unto the truth, From form and no-form, pleasure-and-pain he's freed." 'This verse of uplift also was spoken by the Exalted One, so I

have heard.'

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So the Buddha is saying that Bahiya has reached a higher level, a higher state of consciousness and being, a state where the four elements are not present: where the stars are not present, where there is no sun. It is not this world, not this universe at all. There is no moon, but there is no darkness. He has reached the level of Reality.

'So when the sage, the brahmana, by wisdom Of his own self hath pierced' -_

the implication is 'to the truth' - 'From form and no-form, pleasure-and-pain he's freed.'

He has gone beyond all the pairs of opposites. He is completely Enlightened, completely released. The Buddha does not say 'He is a brahmin', but that is the suggestion here.

'So when the sage, the brahmana, by wisdom Of his own self hath pierced..., From form and no-form, pleasure-and-pain he's freed.'

So we are still concerned with the brahmin. All these verses have given us some idea of who or what the brahmin is.

This first chapter, (then,) which is called 'Enlightenment', establishes in one way and another the nature of the spiritual ideal. As far as the verses are concerned, they simply describe the brahmin, the ideal man of early Buddhism, before any specifically Buddhist technical terms are introduced. The term 'arahant' is used in the prose portions, but in the verses the term 'brahmin' is used - the pre-Buddhistic term which the Buddha is trying hard to remodel and give a new meaning to.

In the time left, I shall just read through all the verses (in the chapter), and see what impression they produce; leaving aside the prose, just the verses describing the brahmin.

(S. reads all the verses in sequence.)

What is one's overall impression, just from the verses?

: They are very inspiring.

S: And very direct - and completely non-technical. There is no specifically Buddhist language here. The Buddha is just using the ordinary language of his day and trying, as best he can, to express his own new vision through the medium of that language. He is concerned with his new ideal - his ideal for humanity: to be a brahmin, in his sense. So it is quite significant that the compilers, whoever they were - we do not know - put first in the Udana these verses and the episodes that, perhaps in some cases at a later stage, are associated with them. When I took an Udana seminar before, I speculated that, since Savatthi figures prominently in this work, this little collection was put together by monks living at or around that area, and it was their gospel, as it were. It reads very much like a gospel. It is the nearest thing to a gospel in the Christian sense that we have in the whole Pali Canon. It is about the same length as one of the gospels. It is self-contained. It begins at the beginning, with the Buddha's Enlightenment, and there is a certain chronological sequence, or at least development, throughout, as we shall

see as we go on. It is pre-Buddhistic Buddhism, you could [52] say; what I call archaic Buddhism.

What impression do you get about the background of the Dharma, the Buddha and the monks? Who or what have been mentioned so far? First of all, places. The scene is northern India, mainly north-western India, though north-western (?) India also comes into it. Buddhagaya - or the place that we now call Buddhagaya - is mentioned; at that time it was simply the village of Uruvela. And Gaya comes in. Rajagaha comes in and, of course, Savatthi or Sravasti, and the place now called Supparaka or Sopara, on the western sea coast. That is the area. A bit of Indian mythology comes in, with references to devas. There is a yakkha, and a reference to certain religious practices and customs - the caityas that are set up over the ashes of the deceased monk. There is no reference to monasteries. The Buddha lives at the foot of a tree. His monks walk about in the open air. They all go for alms. There is the settlement of Anathapindika - the arama, the rest place, probably some little huts put up in a park, nothing more than that. There is the Bamboo Grove, where the Buddha sometimes stays, outside the gates of Rajagaha.

The teaching is very simple. In this chapter, the Buddha is simply concerned to define what he means by the ideal man, what is the ideal for human life, what the new man is like, and to describe some of his characteristics and distinguish him from the old-fashioned brahmin, to distinguish the new spiritual ideal from the old, ethnic ideal. That is what he is concerned with in this chapter. So this really does come at the beginning. There is no doctrine, in the ordinary sense, apart from the twelve nidanas in their rather truncated form. It is just the ideal, what sort of life, what sort of man the Buddha wants to see. He wants to see the new brahmin, as it were, who afterwards was called the arhant and even, later on, the Bodhisattva. In archaic Buddhism the ideal is the ideal of the brahmin - the ideal described in contemporary Indian terms. The arhant is the same ideal, but described in terms of a more systematic Buddhist tradition, and the Bodhisattva is, again, the same ideal presented even more fully, correcting some early misinterpretations which had crept in since the Buddha's own time.

Devaraja: Didn't the Buddha use the term Bodhisattva in (relation to) other things?

S: Not, as far as we know, in Pali. He uses it with regard to himself before leaving home. 'When I was a bodhisatta' - 'when I was still in search of the Truth, of Enlightenment.' Here bodhisatta in Pali probably equals bodhisakta in Sanskrit, one who seeks bodhi, not Bodhisattva, 'being of bodhi' or 'being of Enlightenment'.

So we see, in the verses especially, the Buddha being very direct and straightforward, speaking out his new vision of the new man, what is the spiritual ideal, what man should strive for and try to become or be like. You notice that the Buddha speaks in poetry, or at least in rough and ready verse. It's metrical, it has a measure, a beat, which is also, of course, associated with a strong pressure of emotion. When you feel very strongly, you tend to speak rhythmically, and Pali is a language that goes very easily into metre, much more easily than English. So it would be quite easy to express oneself in this way and speak in verses, a measured language or a sort of cadence.

Subhuti: (Is not) most of the earliest material in the Pali Canon, in fact, in verse?

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S: It would be true to say that. For instance, the very archaic material in the Sutta-Nipata is in verse, the first of the books in the Samyutta-Nikaya, which is called Sagathaka, 'with verses' - very much like the Udana, with a little prose section and the verses - and the verses are very archaic. Scholars tell us that the language, as language, is archaic compared with other portions of the Canon, and certainly we can see for ourselves that the teaching is very archaic in the sense that it is non-technical; it is very new, very fresh. The Buddha is just using the expressions of ordinary, current speech. Nothing is systematized as yet. At any rate, do you get any definite impression of the background? (Pause.) There is quite a lot in these few little sections, even references to certain animals and certain social practices, customs and attitudes.

: It all seems very simple, very simple and clear language.

S: Uncomplicated, yes. It is certainly a long way from the Abhidharma! - or the Abhidharma is a long way from it, I should say. It is a bit close, in some ways, to the Upanishads - the older Upanishads, that is, like the Chandogya or the Vihadarmaka.

Is there any general question or comment on what we have done today? What about the general idea set forth in the Buddha's description in these verses, of the brahmin or brahmana? What impression do you get? How would you put it into contemporary speech?

ABC: That he is someone who is very real, very true to himself.

: He is a complete person.

S: A very free person.

Subhuti: The main impression seems to be that he is not bogged down in convention ...

S: Ah, yes.

Subhuti: - and merely ethical observance.

S: Or external observance. The Buddha's ideal of the brahmin is contrasted with the conventional, the ethnic idea about the brahmin.

: He's quite a bold person, really.

S: Quite a bold person, yes; an unconventional, or at least non-conventional, person. He was anti-conventional, sometimes.

Devaraja: The image that comes up is of the sadhu rather than of the very trim, neat, shaven-headed Buddhist monk. Much more the matted hair ...

S: Right, that is true. And a dirty robe. (Laughing) I shall never forget, shortly after my ordination, I came down from Kalimpong and visited the Mahabodhi Society's headquarters in Calcutta. The head monk there was most upset because I had on a dirty old robe. It wasn't dirty in the sense that it wasn't laundered - it had certainly been washed - but it was old and a bit faded. Do you know what he said to me? 'Sangharakshita, take off that robe. I'll give you a

new one. If people see us wearing robes like that, what will they think of us?' (Laughter.) He [54] said that in all seriousness, and gave me a new robe - a bright yellow Sinhalese type, just like your shirt, which he insisted I should wear. He didn't like me wearing my shabby old robe when visitors were about. He actually said, 'What will people think of us?!'

It might be a good idea to take these little verses and string them together, and have them as a reading sometimes, maybe on the occasion of ordination or something like that. There is also a very long series of verses in the Sutta-Nipata, and again in the Dhammapada - the Sutta-Nipata verses appear in the Dhammapada - about the brahmin. There is the Brahmanavagga, which is the last vagga but one of the Dhammapada, which contains much the same sort of material as this. It is a longer and in a way more elaborate description. This (passage of the Udana) is perhaps even more archaic than the Brahmanavagga - that is my impression.

: There are one or two that do not quite make sense on their own without the prose text.

S: They make sense, in the sense that the general meaning is clear, but for the specific references - for example, to Sangamaji and the play upon his name, and why the Buddha spoke about him in that way - you need the little episode to understand that. The verses really need retranslating, to get rid of this 'ardent' and 'musing', (for instance). I don't know how that could be done.

: And the Anglo-Saxon phrases.

S: Yes, the 'in sooth'. That makes it archaic in a wrong sense, doesn't it?

Subhuti: A pseudo-biblicalism.

S: Yes. But even a verse like 'He joys not at her coming, he grieves not when she goes' does not need a little episode; you can imagine it for yourself.

Sona: If you read the one before, and then quickly go on to the next one:

'The brahmin is beyond this goblin and his din. He joys not at her coming, he grieves not when she goes.'

S (laughing): No, there should be a suitable pause! But I don't like that word 'goblin'.

Devaraja: 'Demon' would be better.

S: Daimon, yes.

: 'Daimon with his din'.

Subhuti: The very last verse is quite Prajnaparamita. (Murmurs of assent.)

S: It is, as it were, a-cosmic; non-cosmic. It goes beyond the cosmos. It (concerns) the Transcendental plane, as it were, beyond the triple mundane sphere.

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There are passages in the Upanishads that are not very different from the first few lines here - I think in the Chandogya - and in the Itivuttaka there is a passage very similar to this. Note also the emphasis on 'Of his own self'. He doesn't have it at second-hand. He knows it and experiences it for himself. This is a very characteristic Buddhist emphasis. If ever I finish doing the Dhammapada translation that I started, I shall feel very tempted to produce a new translation of the Udana, because it is in quite simple Pali. There are some Pali texts of which I would hesitate even to try to produce an English version, but the Pali here on the whole is quite simple. You don't need to know very much Pali to be able to follow it.

One also notices about the teaching here, with the Buddha and the disciples, that everything is very firmly embedded in the concrete historical context. You don't often get this in Indian literature. You don't get it in Hindu literature at all, except perhaps to some extent in the case of the Upanishads - but there not to the extent that you get it in this Canon, the Pali literature. If you read, for instance, the Puranas, which are popular Hindu works, you don't get a glimpse of concrete human historical life. It is all very vague, very general, almost woolly. There is a lot of teaching and many abstract ideas, a lot of supernatural happenings, but no concrete, human historical detail whatever.

[56]

Day Two

"Chapter II - Mucalinda.

Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Uruvela, on the bank of the river Neranjara, at the root of the mucalinda, having just won the highest wisdom. Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated for seven days in one posture and experienced the bliss of release. Then arose a great storm of rain out of due season, and for seven days there was rainy weather, cold winds and overcast skies. So Mucalinda, the snake rajah, coming forth from his haunt, encircled the body of the Exalted One seven times with his coils and stood rearing his great hood above the Exalted One's head (with the idea): Let not heat or cold or the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind and heat or creeping things annoy the Exalted One.

Now after the lapse of those seven days the Exalted One roused himself from that concentration of mind. Then Mucalinda, the snake rajah, seeing that the sky was clear and free of clouds, unwrapped his folds from the Exalted One's body, and, withdrawing his own form and creating the form of a youth, stood before the Exalted One, holding up his clasped hands and doing reverence to him. Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Happy his solitude who glad at heart Hath dhamma learnt and doth the vision see! Happy is that benignity towards The world which on no creature worketh harm. Happy the freedom from all lust, th'ascent Past and beyond the needs of sense-desires. He who doth crush the great 'I am' conceit - This, even this, is happiness supreme."

S: In this section we have gone, as it were, back to the beginning, to the time just after the Buddha's Enlightenment, and this is the well-known Mucalinda episode. I have spoken about this in a lecture which I expect most of you have heard: 'Archetypal Symbolism in the

Biography of the Buddha', so perhaps we need not go into that very much. Let us concentrate on the verse.

Sona: In the prose it says 'at the root of the mucalinda'. What does that mean?

S: It is the name of a species of tree, the mucalinda tree. Mucalinda the snake rajah has the same name, presumably because he lives in the vicinity of that tree. According to the note, it is 'nipa-rukkha - a sort [57] of asoka tree, but others say mucala'. It is a kind of tree and the snake king seems to be named after the tree. If the name of the tree is mucala - if it is a mucala tree - Mucala-inda is the lord of the mucala, so he could be a sort of snake-cum-tree-spirit.

The verse which the Buddha utters, the udana, does not seem to have a very close connection with the prose episode. He simply, it seems, describes his own mental and spiritual state at that moment. He says:

'Happy his solitude who glad at heart Hath dhamma learnt and doth the vision see! Happy is that benignity towards The world which on no creature worketh harm.'

The word translated 'benignity' is, of course, a state or condition of metta.

'Happy the freedom from all lust, th'ascent Past and beyond the needs of sense-desires. He who doth crush the great "I am" conceit - This, even this, is happiness supreme.'

In this udana the Buddha gives expression to his own experience of complete happiness as he sits at the foot of the mucalinda tree shortly after his Enlightenment. He even says why he is happy. He is happy because he has learned the Truth; he has seen the vision of things as they really are. He is happy because he abides in a state of love and good will towards all living beings. He is happy because he has no need of any object of the senses; and, above all, because there is no 'I', no empirical ego or self. Because of all those things, he sits there completely happy after his Enlightenment. Is there any query on this?

Subhuti: I am not sure in what sense you are using the expression 'empirical ego or self'. Often, before, you have used it (in the sense that) there is an empirical self, in the sense that there is something that functions ...

S: So there is.

Subhuti: - but you said that the empirical ego or self no longer exists after Enlightenment.

S: Not that there is something actually existing in the metaphysical sense first and then it is annihilated, but, more, that what we experience as the empirical self or ego, as I call it - which is actually there and is real so far as it exists - is expanded, one can even say, to infinity. So it isn't that the empirical self is annihilated; it is still there but it is part, as it were, of a larger whole. That is probably the only way that one can put it. For instance, suppose you have a dream. When you are in the midst of that dream you are completely identified with it. But suppose you wake up. You remember your dream; maybe you remember it completely, vividly. So your dream experience is still there, it is not annihilated, it doesn't cease to exist but it is part of the larger whole of the waking consciousness. It is something like that.

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: Almost, it is in its appropriate place, in relationship ...

S: In a manner of speaking; but it isn't as it were, a sort of thing that is taken from one place to another. It is more like a limitation which is removed. The space which was bounded by the limitation is still there, but it is no longer limited, no longer bounded.

Does anybody experience this as a difficulty - I mean actually experiencing it, as distinct from simply thinking about it - this question of a self, or a higher self and a lower self, ego and non-ego, *atta* and *anatta*? (Silence.) This is one of the vexed questions of Buddhism, at least for some people.

ABC: I experienced it as a difficulty ...

S: You know what it means? I have gone into it as clearly, I think, as it can be gone into, in the lecture on 'Individuality, True and False'. But we have to be very careful about taking it too literally, this language of annihilating the self, annihilating the ego.

Devaraja: I feel that quite strongly in class situations, that people should be encouraged to develop a healthy self-confidence. I've been through this difficulty of coming across very strong accusations of ego, which are just in a way counter-ego, from somebody else. I'm beginning to feel quite strongly that - I think this bears out what you said earlier on, about developing a healthy ego first, before it can be transcended.

S: That's true. At the same time, there is such a thing as egotism.

Devaraja: Sure!

S: Therefore the question could be raised: what makes the difference between a healthy self-confidence and egotism?

Devaraja: I think the difference is that a healthy self-confidence is not having the fear of expressing yourself, and following through what you feel to be right. And egotism is kind of using the world to feed, and justify, and make oneself bigger. Something like that.

S: In other words, you are saying that egotism is based on a lack of self-confidence.

Devaraja: Yes, yes.

S: That is really the question: whether you are being really self-confident or whether you are doing a cover-up operation - you are not really self-confident, you are merely egoistic. Sometimes it is very difficult to tell. Sometimes we may feel somebody, or ourselves, is being self-confident when in fact he is being egoistic, and vice versa.

Devaraja: I personally had a lot of trouble when Senga(?) was living at Aryatara. (If you expressed) any opinion which he didn't agree with, he would smash you with the word 'Ego!' I found that very undermining. In retrospect, I see that a lot of what I felt was objectively right and appropriate, and I did have cause to disagree.

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S: Yes, you should be very careful, if you disagree with anybody, of attributing their attitude or convictions to ego. That is a very convenient way of countering their opinion or argument. There is quite a bit of this in India - one often hears 'It's your ego' - or in some spiritual, or pseudo-spiritual, circles in the West. If you assert yourself a bit strongly or have definite opinions or convictions, 'It's just your ego'.

Devaraja: In the long run, it can have quite a detrimental effect on people and can make them feel very blocked. They can get very negative and lose a lot of their strength.

S: Yes. What sort of person do you think adopts this sort of strategy or tactics?

Devaraja: Hurling the accusation of ego?

S: Yes.

ABC: People who lack self-confidence.

S: Exactly.

Devaraja: People who feel threatened by different opinions.

S: In other words, egoistic people. It is a sort of negative egotism. Not a positive egotism but a negative egotism. It is the egotism of the weak as opposed to the egotism of the strong.

This again is something that one has to watch in oneself as well as in others: what has been called the tyranny of the weak over the strong. I think this has to be watched. If you can't oppose someone openly and honestly because you lack self-confidence, you try to undermine them, and one way in which you can do this is by labelling their quite healthy and genuine self-confidence as egotism, which, of course, at once places you in the superior spiritual position of the unegoistic person seeing through someone else's egotism. If you are vested already with a sort of spiritual authority, as perhaps Senga(?) was, it is very easy to label everybody else's opinions, when they disagree with yours, as manifestations of egotism; and that becomes very dangerous. I think one should be very careful before ever labelling anybody else, even momentarily, as egoistic.

Still, the Buddha does say: 'He who doth crush the great "I am" conceit - This, even this, is happiness supreme.' The Buddha, of course, throughout the Pali Canon, strikes one as a very self-confident person. There was no hesitation on his part in making his views known clearly and unmistakably. He had no hesitation in putting down the really conceited and egoistic, and in telling them exactly where they got off in no uncertain terms. So there was no false humility on the Buddha's part; he was really self-confident in the best and most spiritual sense. The Buddha certainly was not mealy-mouthed. So when he spoke about crushing the "'I am" conceit', it certainly was not the weak trying to tyrannize over the strong.

It is much better and much more helpful to speak in terms of growth, development and expansion rather than in terms of getting rid of the self or the ego. That negative language is hardly ever helpful.

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: Would it be valuable to use terms like finding a new basis to operate from - something like that?

S: Possibly; or a new dimension of consciousness, a new or higher point of view, a comprehensive or open point of view, rather than saying, 'You must get rid of your ego'. That irritates people at once, obviously.

Sona: That really ... expanding your ego.

S: But there is quite a lot of pseudo-spirituality, as I call it, in circulation, mostly derived, I think, from Vedantic sources. They tend to be rather down on the ego - down, in fact, on anything that smacks of self-confidence, energy and vigour; anything that makes them feel weak and puts them on the defensive or makes them feel threatened.

Therefore, caution is indicated in the use of the sort of language that the Buddha uses here. (He uses it) quite validly and genuinely, but we should be very careful how we use such language in our ordinary dealings with people. We can also say that the Buddha, after entirely getting rid of egotism himself, entirely divesting himself of what he calls the "'I am" conceit', remained in the world functioning very vigorously as an unmistakably individual person; so much so that, as we saw yesterday, he could be compared to a lion, to a bull, to an elephant and to a serpent or dragon.

"ii Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now on that occasion among a great number of monks, who after their meal had returned from alms-quest and had assembled and sat together in the service-hall, this chance talk arose: 'Pray, your reverence, which of these two rajahs is the wealthier, which has the greater possessions, the greater stores, territories, conveyances, forces, powers and potency, namely, the Magadhan rajah Seniya Bimbisara or Pasenadi the Kosalan?' This chance talk was unfinished when the Exalted One, rising from his solitude at eventide, came to the service-hall and on getting there sat down on a seat made ready. On being seated he said this to the monks: 'Pray, monks, on what talk were ye engaged here seated and assembled, and what was the chance talk left unfinished by you?'

' This, sir, was the chance talk that arose ... in the service-hall. "Which of the two rajahs is the wealthier ... the Magadhan rajah Bimbisara or Pasenadi the Kosalan?" This was the chance talk that was left unfinished when the Exalted One arrived.' 'Monks, it is not seemly for you clansmen who in faith have left home for the homeless to engage in such talk. Monks, when ye sit together in conclave, (one of) two things should be done, either talk in accordance with dhamma or the Ariyan silence.' Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

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"The bliss of lusts and heaven-world equal not One sixteenth of the bliss of craving's ending."

S: Once again, just as at the beginning of chapter I, the scene shifts from Buddhagaya, as we call it now, to Sravasti, and the next five or six sections are located at Sravasti. Sravasti figures prominently in the Udana suggesting perhaps that the episodes and verses collected in the Udana were put together in this form by the monks of that area.

I think that this is the first time Bimbisara and Pasenadi have made their appearance in the Udana. Bimbisara was the ruler, the rajah, of the kingdom of Magadha, corresponding roughly to the present-day state of Bihar in north-eastern India, and Pasenadi was the king of Kosala, corresponding roughly to the state of Uttar Pradesh. So they were adjacent, and also they were rivals. It was the great political question of the day during the greater part of the Buddha's life, especially towards the end, whether Magadha would swallow up Kosala or whether Kosala would swallow up Magadha, and in the course of the Buddha's lifetime both the great kingdoms were expanding and swallowing up their smaller, usually republican, neighbours. Towards the end of the Buddha's life, his own state, the Sakya territory, was swallowed up by the kingdom of Kosala and lost its independence. After the Buddha's death, Magadha swallowed up Kosala and eventually Asoka ruled over the greater part of India and over the Magadhan empire.

So we may say that it was rather natural, from a human point of view, that the monks gathered together while the Buddha was not there - he was sitting silently meditating in his own quarters - should be talking over the politics of the day: whether Magadha was going to swallow up Kosala or Kosala, Magadha; whether the king of Magadha was more powerful than the king of Kosala or vice versa. No doubt, even though they were monks and had given up the world, they were still very interested in these questions, so they seem to have been having a good get-together about them.

So the Buddha, when he appears, asks them what they were talking about before he came along, and they tell him that they were discussing the politics of the day. Then he says: 'Monks, it is not seemly for you clansmen who in faith have left home for the homeless to engage in such talk. Monks, when ye sit together in conclave' - the language of the English translation is rather more formal than the Pali; 'conclave' suggests the conclave of cardinals meeting together to elect the pope. It just means the monks assembling together informally. 'When you meet together in this way, two things should be done, either talk in accordance with dhamma or the Ariyan silence.'

Do you think the Buddha means this quite literally - that the monks were never, never to talk about anything except the Dharma?

Subhuti: No, it's 'in accordance with dhamma'.

S: In accordance with Dharma, yes.

Subhuti: That is, from the point of view of the higher evolution.

S: Yes. So they could even have been discussing politics in accordance with Dharma. It is quite a big let-out, in a way. (Laughter.)

Sagaramati: It is quite interesting that the term 'clansmen' is used.

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S: It is kulaputra. Kula is a family; putra is son. 'A son of a family', which means a respectable person belonging to an established family.

Devaraja: I just wondered whether they might have been talking because they were Kosalans,

say.

S: That isn't actually stated. Savatthi itself would have been in Kosala. Sometimes kulaputra is translated as 'men of family' or even 'men of good family': those who come from families of long standing, with a recognized lineage, not from the lower classes where no record is kept of these things and no traditions are kept up. In other words, they are people who came originally from respectable families. That is what it really means.

I must also say - I haven't got the Pali here - that I rather suspect that 'in accordance' is not strictly in the Pali. I rather suspect that it is dhammakattha. That usually is the term translated as talk about or in accordance with Dharma: 'Dharma-talk'. I should like to check up that 'in accordance with' before basing an interpretation upon it, because it may not be strictly there in the original. Dhammakattha is sometimes translated by Woodward as 'pious talk' - talk which is in accordance with Dharma, in accordance with the Truth or Reality of things. But probably it would not be right to regard it as talk about Buddhism in, as it were, the narrower sense. It really means (not) talking about anything without going into the underlying principles involved.

For instance, it occurs to me - let me give you an example - there is a famous work, a Pali text, called the Mahavamsa. Mahavamsa means great lineage, great account, great relation or great story. It is usually translated 'Great Chronicle'. It is the chronicle of Ceylon, the chronicle of the kings of Ceylon; and it involves or includes the history of the introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon. So the question was mooted among the monks in Ceylon, when this Mahavamsa was compiled, I think in the fifth century, by Mahanama, whether monks could engage in the compilation of historical work of that kind, because they dealt with ... (break in recording) So in the end they concluded that if, at the end of each chapter, they put a little colophon to the effect that 'The events of the previous chapter make it clear how impermanent everything is; that kings come and go, and human life is short' - then the whole of the chapter becomes a reflection upon impermanence, and in this way it becomes acceptable and there is no harm in monks compiling such records, because they assist one's understanding of impermanence.

Obviously, that can operate in a highly mechanical and almost sophisticated fashion, but there is an element of truth in it, none the less. So even though there may not in the Pali here be anything corresponding to 'in accordance with', that is in a way the sense of it: that if you approach any subject and go into it deeply enough, if you go into the basic principles involved, if you go into the truth and reality of that subject, that could be said to be dhammakattha, because Dhamma is not just Buddhism in the narrow sense as a religion. Dhamma means Truth, or Reality, or Law, or Principle, and so on.

So, if it is superficial gossip, that is ruled out; but if from the political events and historical happenings you go deeply into the principles of human life and what it is really all about, this could be considered still as dhammakattha. But obviously you have to watch yourself.

Francis Bacon said: 'Histories make men wise' - the study of history makes men wise, because they become acquainted with the vicissitudes of things - and the study of the poets makes them witty.

But what about the verse? The verse does not seem to be very closely connected.

'The bliss of lusts and heaven-world equal not One sixteenth of the bliss of craving's ending.'

This suggests that usually people consider that, if a craving is satisfied, that is bliss, that is happiness. But the Buddha says that not to have any craving at all for anything mundane, or even anything heavenly, is the real happiness: (that is), to be free from craving. Craving itself is a sort of affliction, and the satisfaction of that craving is just like putting a plaster on a wound. Yes, it is a pleasant and soothing experience to have the plaster put on the wound, but the wound is a wound. It is better not to have the wound at all. Nowadays people find it very difficult to accept, or even to understand, that to be in a state with no craving is a very positive and blissful experience. People think in terms of the satisfaction of craving and constituting happiness. Every advertisement suggests that. One can even say that, unfortunately, the state of many people is so dull, so boring, that they have almost to stir up some craving to make life a little interesting, and then satisfy that craving to get a little bit of happiness. This is usually considered quite normal and natural.

Akin to this, I saw an advertisement on the railways a couple of years ago at almost every station on a certain line I used to travel on. It showed a man standing waiting for a train, and the slogan was 'Don't just stand there. Eat something!' He might have been standing there quite happily in a contemplative mood, but that was not good enough. He had to be encouraged to crave for something, then to go and satisfy that craving.

But the question is: where does that craving come from? You can have the experience of sitting quite happily, perhaps on a garden seat, and everything is calm and quiet and pleasant; the sun is shining, the birds are singing, you feel quite peaceful and happy; but suddenly you feel bored or restless, you want to go and do something. Why is that? Why can't you just go on sitting there happily and contentedly? You are enjoying yourself, but it is as though you don't want to go on enjoying yourself. There is an inner restlessness. It is as though you want to be dissatisfied. You start craving to crave. Do you know what I mean?

: It is almost like feeling that you ought to be dissatisfied, that something is wrong.

S: Right, if you're sitting there happy and content, it is as though something was wrong. It is such an unfamiliar state, perhaps. In the same way, some people find, when their meditation is going on very well, that they really feel like sitting for another ten or fifteen minutes and could do so quite easily, but they don't. It is almost as though, as you said, they feel they shouldn't, in some perverted way.

I remember in south India there was a quite well-known female yogi - I forget her name. She had a very interesting little theory. She said on one occasion that the happiness that people experienced on the occasion of the satisfaction of desires - she was thinking especially of sense desires - was not on account of the satisfaction of the desire but on account of its sudden cessation on satisfaction. So the happiness that they were experiencing was not on account of the desire having been satisfied but on account of the desire momentarily ceasing.

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: Very true.

S: Just for a moment, you were no longer troubled by the desire because it had been satisfied, and not being troubled by the desire gave you a feeling of happiness and content - not the satisfaction of the desire as such, but its cessation, at least for an instant. It is this that the Buddha is talking about, indefinitely prolonged. 'One sixteenth' is an idiom.

'The bliss of lusts and heaven-world equal not one sixteenth of the bliss of craving's ending.'

It is really opposed to the modern point of view - the idea that you are most happy when you don't want anything.

: That's really true.

S: But no doubt you have to sample a few fleshpots first, and taste the bitter scourings before you can really start feeling and thinking in that way! If you are told this when you are young and before you start experiencing life, usually you just don't believe it. It seems like some old wives' tale. It is as though people are trying to keep you away from the good things of life.

ABC: It's difficult enough to get to the point where you can really try out the fleshpots. (Laughter.) There are so many restrictions!

S: Yes, right! It reminds me of some months ago when I was blithely going on about people experiencing the fleshpots, and someone made a similar remark - that the way I talked it was as though it was quite easy to sample them quite extensively, and someone pointed out to me that it wasn't always the case! - not so far as they were concerned, anyway.

But, no doubt, having sampled a few fleshpots, people do at least from time to time experience the truth of what that female yogi said: that it is after the craving, of whatever kind, has been satisfied that you momentarily - at least, for a short while - are free from that craving. Not that it lasts very long, but to the extent that you are free from it, and for the time that you are free from it, you can experience a sort of contentment. But, unfortunately, the craving re-awakes and then it has to be satisfied again. If one can stay in that state of contentment, that is the best. But for quite a few people, if not the vast majority, the experience of the contentment that comes upon the cessation of craving can be experienced only after the satisfaction of craving, but it doesn't last long. At least, though, it gives a sort of glimpse.

: It gives you a sort of peace of mind, momentarily.

S: And then you can start thinking how nice it would be to experience that all the time. But it doesn't come about by satisfying the craving, but by resolving the craving. Many people commit the mistake of thinking that you can get to that state by satisfying the craving again and again and again; but you don't. In fact, the law of diminishing returns operates.

Also, it can be said that a lot of people experience, upon the satisfaction of craving, a sense of anticlimax. It is as though there was a [65] tremendous build-up of anticipation, but once you have experienced it and it is all over you think 'What was it, after all?' The best thing, sometimes, in the whole experience is just the contentment you feel after the craving has been not satisfied but momentarily exhausted, and you are free from it for a little while. You feel quite calm and content and peaceful. But it is the cessation or momentary suspension of the

craving that makes you feel like that, not the actual satisfaction.

Devaraja: Would it be valid to say - I am not sure, it just occurs to me - that we try to satisfy the craving on the wrong level?

S: What do you mean by that?

Devaraja: Well, that, in very general terms, there is a craving after some kind of happiness or release, but it is assuaged in the wrong sort of way, on the wrong level.

S: The basic question is: what is that craving for? What does it really represent?

Devaraja: To some extent - I think I've noticed it in my own case - it is a sort of confirmation of my existence.

S: The satisfaction of the craving? In other words, a form of egotism.

Devaraja: Um - maybe, yes. I am not sure how broadly to use that term.

S: If that were so, you could say, therefore, that when you have at least a momentary experience of cessation of craving, you also have a momentary experience, to some extent, of non-ego.

Devaraja: Mm. I am very interested also by this thing of not seeking existence through the senses. Isn't that talked about in the Scriptures - the experience of not existing through the senses?

S: Or not existing, or functioning, solely on that level.

Devaraja: Once or twice I've had that experience of not being kind of existing, almost being sort of chained through the senses to existence, but still in existence. And I had a really tremendous peace and sort of happiness, a sense of freedom.

S: Well, for instance, reflect upon the fact that you have to eat three times a day, that you are constantly having to function through the senses and quite a few of your thoughts are geared to that function, that every day you have to ingest a certain amount of material to keep yourself going, physically speaking.

ABC: But as an artist is really involved in his work, he doesn't think of it in that way. He might just keep on working for a day, and accumulate energy to keep on going and, you know, eat if he has to.

S: But if you think of someone who is a sort of gourmet who really lives to eat, he is functioning entirely through the senses and therefore living entirely on the sense level, and all his mental faculties are geared to that sort of function.

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Sagaramati: Is there a sublimation of the process of craving, then? I am thinking now about the Puja. If that sort of 'I want', as it were, the need for something, is taken on to another level,

you are getting near what you really need.

S: This (reflects) a certain ambiguity in the word 'need'. There is neurotic need, neurotic craving, and there is need in an objective sense, that is, something necessary to your development. So that the Puja is not, or should not be, the satisfaction of a neurotic need - though, in a few cases, it might be that - but it is a satisfaction of or provision for a growth need.

Sagaramati: I was thinking of craving being mixed with wrong view; of 'craving' meaning that you want something which you don't need. That would be neurotic craving?

S: Yes, that would be neurotic craving.

Devaraja: The connection I was trying to make between existence through the senses, or not seeking existence through the senses, was perhaps that the real need was to find some existence where one wasn't chained, as it were, through the senses to the phenomenal world, the sensual world. And that being the real need, and the real peace of mind was arising from that. But, because we are so connected to the world and stuck to the world through our senses, we can only seek a temporary satisfaction through the senses; and there is a sort of need, but it is functioning on that level through the senses, whereas the real need is to ...

S: There is an objective biological need, as well as the subjective neurotic biological need. That is, you can have an actual hunger, which is quite healthy because you have, or are in part, a physical organism that needs nourishment; also you can have a quite neurotic craving for food, which has nothing to do with actual hunger.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now on that occasion a great number of youths were ill-treating a snake with a stick between Savatthi and Jeta Grove. Now the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking robe and bowl, was entering Savatthi and there saw those youths ill-treating a snake with a stick. Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to these verses of uplift:

Whoso wreaks injury with rod On creatures fain for happiness, When for the self hereafter he seeks happiness, Not his, it may be, happiness to win. Who wreaks no injury with rod On creatures fain for happiness, When for the self hereafter he seeks happiness, That very man may happiness attain."

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This is the sort of sight you can see quite easily in India - boys ill-treating a snake, or a dog, or a cat or something like that. The Buddha himself also saw that, and he makes this comment:

'Whoso wreaks injury with rod On creatures fain for happiness, When for the self hereafter he seeks happiness, Not his, it may be, happiness to win.

Who wreaks no injury with rod On creatures fain for happiness, When for the self hereafter he seeks happiness, That very man may happiness attain.'

What do you think the Buddha means here?

ABC: Treat others as you treat yourself.

_ : Karma.

S: Karma, yes.

Sona: What does 'fain' mean?

S: Desirous. I am afraid this is an example of Woodward's rather archaic English. 'Fain for happiness' means desirous of happiness, bent on happiness. The Buddha is saying that it is natural that all beings seek happiness. You don't wish your own search for happiness to be obstructed; don't obstruct the search of others for happiness. In other words, put yourself imaginatively in the place of others - which is quite difficult to do.

Sona: Going back to craving for a moment, you did say that animals are free from craving, except for the craving for existence.

S: Animals aren't free from biological craving, but it isn't neurotic in that sense, is it, unless they have been in association with human beings? You can have neurotic dogs, cats or horses. You can even have neurotic lions and tigers if you keep them in a zoo.

Anyway, I think in these verses the Buddha is saying a little more than that you shouldn't obstruct the happiness of others because you also would like to be happy. He is saying that if you obstruct the happiness of others your own chances of obtaining happiness may be reduced. Why do you think that is? It is the law of karma, but what is the law of karma - how does it operate?

Subhuti: The state of mind which would lead you to perform such actions will lead you into unhappy situations.

S: Right, yes. If you are quarrelsome and aggressive, through your quarrelsomeness and aggressiveness you may cause others to suffer, but that same quarrelsomeness and aggressiveness may lead you into situations where you become involved with people who are even more quarrelsome and even more aggressive than you, and who make you suffer.

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: Is it possibly even more direct than that? Is it that the state of mind of happiness is incompatible with a state of mind in which you could be tormenting (others) - that you can't be happy at the same time as you are doing something like that?

S: Mm, yes; though the Buddha does say 'hereafter' - 'When for the self hereafter he seeks happiness, Not his, it may be, happiness to win.'

But also the question arises: why do you torment others? Why do you think the boys were tormenting the snake?

Sagaramati: They were probably not aware of the fact that animals could experience pain.

S: They were not aware, yes. It seems that children are often not aware of this, and they have to learn it. But supposing you are aware of it, or you do know it, or at least it is not unknown to you, but still you persist in tormenting others; why do you think that is?

Sona: ...ness?

S: Not necessarily, no. I think it is more that you are not happy yourself. If you were happy yourself, you couldn't torment others. And there are various subtle ways of tormenting others - not necessarily physically tormenting them, but restricting and confining and causing trouble for them, or inhibiting them. In other words, the sadist is the man who is frustrated, taking sadism and frustration in the widest possible sense.

So when you trouble others, it is either because you are just unaware of what you are doing, as in the case of the young and maybe inexperienced, or because you are not happy yourself. You are already troubled within maybe by your own unsatisfied cravings.

Sagaramati: Is there any distinction here between this and what may be called joy? It appears that you can experience joy when you are in a quite unhealthy state of mind. You could, say, be torturing a snake and at the same time be sort of laughing and quite joyous. That is distinct from contentment.

S: Yes. Oh, yes. It is a sort of fiendish glee, you could say. There is a word for this in German which we don't have in English - Schadenfreude. Unholy glee, we say also, don't we?

Devaraja: I find sometimes when things get really bad personally, that I get a crazy sort of glee, because, you know, there is nothing I can do about it. I don't know if that is the same sort of thing.

S: No, I don't think it is. I think that is your own positive energy which cannot be downed. The situation is such that there is no actual outlet for it, but it is there, it cannot be downed, so it just comes out in that sort of causeless way. It transcends the situation. It has got no outlet through the situation, it is completely blocked there, so it just finds an outlet. You may start laughing almost hysterically, even though the situation is really bad and there is nothing you can do about it. But it means that you are not really downed; you are not really defeated. There is merely nothing that you can do about the situation, so the energy that you have and that you could put into the situation if the situation wasn't so bad just escapes in this way - which is good [69] because it means it isn't being blocked. So it is better, actually, if this happens. It is your healthy refusal to accept defeat. It is the only way in which you can express your non-acceptance of defeat, that your energy is still there. It is only the situation that is completely blocking any constructive action on your part, so you just give vent to this crazy, hysterical laughter. It is only crazy because the situation doesn't justify it. But the fact that it refuses to accept the situation, and refuses in the only way which is open to it, is quite positive.

ABC: That's interesting. I must admit I had the idea in my head that you should always accept a situation first before you do anything about it.

S: But what do you mean by acceptance? In this particular instance, there is a situation externally of complete stalemate and blockage. At the same time, the person concerned has

creative energy, but the situation is such that he or she sees no way of affecting that situation. It may be that the situation is created by entirely objective factors, factors which are too strong for him or her to alter. At the same time, the energy is there. It can't go into the situation to change it, so it just escapes in the form of this crazy laughter, or glee, or whatever. So it is in a way not a non-acceptance. It recognizes the situation and would like to do something about it, but it can't, so the energy escapes in that way.

Devaraja: Accompanying that, in the once or twice it has happened to me, it has been like not caring what the situation does to me any more. I don't know whether that's ...

S: It really means that you transcend the situation in the only way that is open to you. Of course, the situation should be accepted in the sense of recognizing it as an existing fact, because that's the first thing you have to do before you can deal with it, if it is a negative situation. But you yourself are not completely identified with the situation, and even though you can do nothing about it you don't accept that you can do nothing about it. You've got energy there, and that energy transcends that situation and expresses itself not through the situation, which is impossible, but just through your quite inappropriate laughter. This is why people have been known to experience a sort of glee before they were executed. They were not happy because they were going to be executed, but they had this positive energy which could not be downed.

Sona: Sometimes the hysterical laughter turns to tears after a short while.

S: Yes, it's the same thing really. It is an expression of energy slightly positive in one case and slightly negative in the other. The energy itself, of course, is positive.

There is a very good example of this sort of thing in the life of St. Francis. I have referred to this before in a slightly different context and some of you have probably heard it. There is a story in the life of St. Francis - in the Fioretti, the Little Flowers of St. Francis - where St. Francis and the friars are recounting their greatest experience of joy. Do you remember this? One monk says, 'When I was meditating alone in the forest, that was the real joy.' Another says, 'When I was [70] able to help such-and-such a poor old woman and I saw how happy it made her, that was the greatest joy.' Another says, 'When I was praying in front of the sacrament in church, I was carried away by ecstasy. That was the greatest joy.' Another: 'When I was reading the gospel and I read how Christ did such-and-such and said such-and-such, that was the greatest joy.' When they have all described their greatest joys, St. Francis says, 'I shall tell you my greatest joy. Once I was wandering in a very wild and solitary place with a single companion and we got lost. It was a very dark night. We had had nothing to eat for two or three days. The rain was falling, we were soaked to the skin, so tired, so worn out. We really thought we were lost and might be eaten by wolves. We stumbled on right through the night and then, when we were at our wits' end, we saw a gleam of light coming through the window of a little cabin, right in the depths of the forest. So we thought, "Ah, here we are at least." We dragged ourselves up to the door and knocked, and an old woman came out. As soon as she saw us, she said, "You good-for-nothing monks, you won't get anything. Out you go!" Oh, what bliss! Oh, what joy!'

So it is the same sort of thing. The energy transcends the actual circumstances.

Devaraja: There is a similar story in the Zen tradition.

S: And in the life of Milarepa, yes. So it can't depend upon the actual existing objective circumstances.

I have touched on this a little in 'Mind Reactive and Creative', haven't I? The creative mind doesn't - what have I said?

Subhuti: It takes it as its starting point; it's not bound by it.

S: Right. It's not bound by it, yes.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. And on that occasion the Exalted One was esteemed, honoured, thought much of and worshipped; he had deference paid to him and had good supply of robes and alms-food, bed and seat, comforts and medicines for sickness. So also was the order of monks esteemed ... whereas those Wanderers of other views were not esteemed ... got no supply ... So those Wanderers of other views, unable to endure the attention paid to the Exalted One and the order of monks, whether in village or in forest, at sight of the monks reviled them with harsh and bitter words, abused, provoked and worried them. Then a great number of monks came to the Exalted One and, saluting him, sat down at one side. So seated those monks said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, just now the Exalted One is esteemed, honoured, thought much of and worshipped ... whereas those Wanderers of other views are not... Thus, unable to endure the attention paid to the Exalted One, whether in village or in forest, at sight of the monks .. they provoke and worry them.'

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Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

In village or forest, touched by weal or woe, Ascribe it not to self or to another. Contacts assail because of body-base. How can they touch the one that is without it?"

S: Do you notice a little parallel between this section and the previous one - the boys tormenting the snake and the wanderers of other views tormenting the monks with their criticisms?

We are still at Savatthi, and we see that the Buddha's movement is a success. We have gathered even from previous sections that he has quite a number of disciples, and his fame in one way or another reaches even to the west coast - so much so that the wanderers, the parivrajakas of other opinions, are becoming rather upset and in fact jealous of the success of the Buddha and his Sangha. You notice that there is a stock or stereotyped description, which is the same as that used in the case of Bahiya. Bahiya also lived 'esteemed, honoured, thought much of and worshipped; he had deference paid to him and had good supply of robes and alms-food, bed and seat, comforts and medicines for sickness.' That is a standard or stock description of the successful monk or wanderer. '...whereas those Wanderers of other views were not esteemed ... got no supply' etc. That sort of situation arose from time to time in the history of the Order, even during the Buddha's own day.

First, we should say a few words about who the wanderers were. Have you come across this before? The term is the parivrajakas, those who had gone forth, those who had left home for

the homeless life, who were simply wandering about. They were not monks in the conventional sense. They were people who had left their own village or town and their family and were just wandering around, living on alms and usually on some sort of religious or spiritual quest.

There has been quite a bit of discussion among scholars as to what they actually were. Some scholars say they were a sort of gypsies, others that they were just unsettled people who were rather disturbed by the changes of the times and who were uprooted and wandered around. They were a bit sadhu-like, probably more like the modern Indian sadhu than anything else, or like the wandering teachers of the Hellenic world. But there were plenty of them in the Buddha's day. The Buddha himself was one such for a while, and most of his leading followers were recruited from these wanderers. They were the full-timers, as it were, from the spiritual point of view. They had no families, usually, though there were exceptions, as we shall see later on. There were even families of wanderers in a few cases, though not many. Usually, of course, it was difficult to wander if you had a family, especially if you had many children. So, almost always, the wanderers were single people, usually single men, and observing celibacy, just wandering from place to place.

The India of those days seems to have been quite prosperous and well off. There was enough food and to spare, so people didn't mind supporting them, and they sometimes functioned as teachers, some were engaged in ascetic practices. They engaged in various religious or spiritual discussions. Some were genuine seekers, some no doubt were just restless people who liked wandering around. But there were a lot of them in the Buddha's [72] day. The Buddha recruited most of his followers from among the wanderers. His followers who were wanderers were usually called bhikkhus, and became, later on, what we know as monks. But they certainly weren't monks in the fully-developed, later, even Western, sense. 'Wanderers' isn't a bad term, because they did actually wander about for the greater part of the year, and only stayed in one place during the rainy season.

But we must not think of the wanderers as a purely religious phenomenon. They were all the people who couldn't settle down to conventional life, who moved about from place to place. And, don't forget, that was the only way of learning anything new. You had to get out and about. There were no books, no radio, no television, nothing of that sort. If you got fed up with your village life, family life or agriculture, you just left home and wandered about.

So the wanderers were, for the most part, those people who didn't feel the need for the settled, orderly family life; social life was enough. And, of course, in ancient India, unlike ancient Greece, there was no opening into politics. The king was the supreme landowner and autocrat. There was no democratic political life, except in the republics to some extent; but they were breaking up and being absorbed by the monarchies. There was no outlet there. So the more restless, dissatisfied people just left home and wandered. As I said, since the country was quite prosperous, they could be supported. People gave them food quite willingly. But they weren't monks in the later sense. It is quite important to remember that. There were various leaders among them, who gathered together groups of these wanderers and formed brotherhoods. There were six of these in the Buddha's day - six important, well-known ones - apart from his own Sangha.

: One was presumably Mahavira?

S: Mahavira was one, or Nataputta as he is called in the Pali text, Ajitakesakambali(?), Makali, Gosali (?) and several others.

: What does bhikkhu actually mean? Does it mean something like 'beggar'?

S: Bhikkhu means one who lives on alms or bhiksha. It is usually translated by Woodward as 'almsman'. We must beware of reading meanings back into these terms. There were various terms in use; for instance, I didn't mention this, but in yesterday's chapter what is the term in the verses for the ideal man? It is brahmana. There is no specifically religious term. But, in the later chapters, the term bhikkhu is used, which is more specifically Buddhist. Brahmana tends to be dropped. I don't know if there are any examples in this

: At the beginning, it's brahmin, and then it becomes brahmana.

S: But brahmin is simply the anglicized word. It is brahmana in Pali and Sanskrit, but in English it is usually brahmin.

Yes, at the beginning of chapter III, 'For the monk who hath all karma left behind' - the bhikkhu. Not brahmana but bhikkhu. Here it becomes more specifically, as it were, Buddhist. Though in the Dhammapada, brahmana, sramana, bhikkhu are all equated.

: Muni is used quite a lot.

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S: Muni is used, especially in the Sutta-Nipata: the sage, the wise man. This has been used here, too, in one verse, you may remember.

: On what basis did people give these wanderers alms?

S: That is a quite interesting point. In the Buddha's day, it wasn't completely systematized, but the general feeling, which afterwards crystallized into a definite doctrine, especially in the case of Buddhism, was that to give alms to monks was meritorious. You created punya, and that ensured a happy heavenly rebirth for you. So the mechanics of the system were quite interesting. This was the sort of mutual arrangement between what afterwards became the monks and what afterwards became the lay people. The monks were able to give up the world and not work for their own living but be supported willingly by the lay people because the lay people believed that by giving monks alms and supporting them they were acquiring punya, which would redound to their benefit in this life itself, and also after death in the form of a happy heavenly rebirth. That was the basis of the mutual relations of Sangha and laity, as they afterwards developed in more conventional form.

But probably, at the beginning, the almsgiving was more connected with the tradition of hospitality - receiving the guest as someone from outside. The wanderer, monk or bhikkhu came from afar, and maybe you hadn't seen anybody for a long time; no one had come from the outside world to your village or your house, maybe for years, so you were very pleased to see someone from outside who could bring news about what was happening in places far away. So you were very pleased to see him. You didn't mind him staying overnight, and you gave him food. Probably, originally, it was more like that.

Sagaramati: We came across this in Morocco when we were travelling around. People did this; you just stayed the night and they wanted to give you food. (It was the) custom.

S: No doubt it was the custom in all primitive societies where communities were separated by vast distances and where they were happy to meet and to receive new people, people from outside, strangers. These would usually be wandering monks, or just wanderers. Settled family people wouldn't be able to do this. The only people in the Pali Canon who are represented as moving about from place to place, apart from the wanderers themselves, are merchants, and kings in the course of their administration, collecting taxes and so on. Everybody else was stationary most of the time. Maybe you spent your whole life in your own little village. For people of a more adventurous disposition, this was intolerable, so they left and became wanderers. Inasmuch as the country was prosperous and there were no great wars, they could roam about freely; people supported them, were glad to see them. That was the sort of situation. We mustn't think of them as monks who had given up the world in all cases for specifically spiritual reasons, though among them there were many with a spiritual motivation.

Sona: It happens quite a bit in the West now, ... people wandering around...

: Also, presumably, the wandering monk might be a good source of advice, perhaps even medical advice and so on.

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S: Possibly. Even today in India, people tend to ask a monk of any kind for advice on all sorts of subjects, and very often he gives it - whether he is qualified or not - and they accept it with great faith and belief.

: What was the situation of the Order at this stage? Was there any precedent for a monastic order before the Buddha?

S: The question is, what does one mean by 'monastic order'? There is no doubt that the Buddha gathered a sort of little regular band around himself, as did the other teachers. There was a regular term for this: it was called a sangha or gana. The same term was applied to the little brotherhoods of the other teachers. But it was quite loosely organized. It certainly wasn't anything like a monastic order in the later Western sense, or even in the Buddhist sense as the Sangha later on developed. It was a very ad hoc body. Though, in the course of the Udana itself, we see it developing a little. But so far in the Udana, though bhikkhus have been mentioned, there is no mention of any rules. Do you notice that? The ideal is presented, the ideal of the brahmana, the new man as it were, and the nature of that ideal man is made clear - his characteristics, his attributes, and certain qualities to be developed - but there is no hint so far of any form of organization or any rule. Do you notice that?

We will encounter these things a little later on, but still, in the Udana, in a quite rudimentary form. This is quite interesting. We are at a very early stage in the development of the Dharma and the Sangha.

Sagaramati: What happened, then, when the Buddha, say, ordained somebody? You come across instances where the Buddha ordains a monk.

S: Even that hasn't arisen yet, you notice. It is not necessarily excluded, because this is only a selection of episodes. For instance, when the Buddha describes Sariputta and Moggallana, Mahakassapa, Ananda, Devadatta as 'brahmins', the bhikkhus are introduced, as it were, suddenly. They are there. You are not told, in this particular text, how they came to be bhikkhus, how they came to be the Buddha's disciples. This is all left unsaid. Perhaps the compiler does not regard it as important. But the Buddha, so far as way of life was concerned, to some extent found his disciples ready-made. They were already wanderers. They had already gone forth and, having gone forth, having freed themselves from all worldly ties, at least they had taken the negative step already. The positive step was to accept his teaching, practise it and realize it.

In those days, everything was so intense, so heightened, that to meet the Buddha, to hear the Teaching, to practise it and to become Enlightened, took place with remarkable rapidity. There was no time to be ordained! You were Enlightened before you had time to become ordained in any formal sense. So, in a way, ordination was hardly necessary. It was only in later, more benighted days that that formal step had an important place. We shall find that later on; we shall find someone formally Going for Refuge after hearing the Buddha's teaching, but not yet.

Subhuti: You say things were much more heightened then. Why?

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S: Because, presumably, it was immediately after the Buddha's Enlightenment; there was no such thing as Buddhism; he was struggling to express himself, using the terms of contemporary speech and religious terminology, and there was no organization and no precedents; everything was new, everything was purely creative.

But it seems to me, reading the Udana and other texts, that even during the Buddha's own lifetime changes did take place. Things became a little more organized, a little more formalized; the rules became a bit more important than they had been at the beginning. In fact, in the Pali Vinaya somewhere there is a text where the Buddha is represented as saying, 'When I started my mission, there were many arhants and few rules, but now' - he is speaking at the end of his life - 'we have many rules but few arhants.' That is rather interesting. You can't help this development, apparently. We find it taking place, in a very rudimentary way, even during the Buddha's own lifetime. So there has to be a constant effort to keep things creative and prevent them crystallizing and petrifying. But, by the time of the rise of the Mahayana, things had become so crystallized, so petrified, that the Mahayana had to make what was practically a new beginning, and the Vajrayana did the same thing later on when the Mahayana itself had become crystallized and petrified in scholasticism. This is why it is very useful and instructive to read things like the Udana and compare the situation then, and the way of life depicted in this text, with contemporary Buddhist practice in the East, and see what great changes have taken place; perhaps justified, perhaps not in some cases.

So all that you've got so far, and this is going to continue for the greater part of the Udana, is the Buddha moving about teaching, staying at certain recognized localities. There are already three or four places with which he is definitely associated: Buddhagaya, Sravasti, Rajgir - he is definitely associated with those places, and so are his monks. There is no word as yet of anything like a monastery. They spend most of their time in the open air. They have little huts, perhaps, but most of the time they are staying in the forest, dwelling at the foot of trees.

The Buddha is certainly teaching but, as yet, there is no such thing even as a regular sermon. There are no lengthy discourses as yet. There are only sayings; only responses to questions, often in verse. This is the picture so far. There is no organized instruction, no recognizable system, no recognizable organization. All that is in the future. This is within a few years of the Buddha's Enlightenment. So you can see, right at the beginning, how things were.

To the contemporary Indian, it would have seemed simply that, among the wanderers, one particularly remarkable wanderer had arisen, who was banding a lot of the wanderers around himself and attracting people even from outside who still lived at home. This would have been the picture to the contemporary informed Indian. He would have known about the general social and political scene. He would have known that there were such people as wanderers, always moving around, and that they were a very mixed lot. He would have known that some wanderers were more prominent than others and had formed little brotherhoods, and then he'd be hearing more and more, as the years went by, about a certain leading wanderer called Gautama, who seemed to be getting a larger following than anybody else, not only from among the wanderers but, as I said, even from among people who were living at home, even among merchants and among the kings and princes; that he was at the head of a growing movement. They would become more and more aware of this. Then, one [76] day, maybe they would meet a disciple of the Buddha or the Buddha himself, and maybe themselves become caught up in his movement and his mission. This was very much the picture as it would have appeared to someone living in those days in northern India.

We have to be very careful not to read back later developments into those early days. For instance, in contemporary Buddhist art in the East, if episodes like this are illustrated, what do you see? You see the Buddha, beautifully dressed in a neatly pressed yellow robe with a beautiful shambag over one shoulder, a neat little begging bowl and his hair nicely cropped, and with an absolute column of monks, dressed in exactly the same style, with the same expressions, even, but slightly smaller in scale, following behind; and behind them sometimes you will see an enormous building, a great monastery donated perhaps by Anathapindika. But it wasn't like that at all. But contemporary, or even traditional, Buddhist art gives you a quite different picture, a non-historical picture.

Subhuti: Perhaps something closer to that would be the pictures of the Mahasiddhas and people like that.

S: Maybe, to some extent. The groups to which the Mahasiddhas belonged were all part of what was to some extent a reaction against the highly organized, centralized monasticism of those days, and of course the very scholastic approach to Buddhism of those days in the big monastic centres.

Anyway, we have not attended to the verse:

'In village or forest, touched by weal or woe, Ascribe it not to self or to another. Contacts assail because of body-base. How can they touch the one that is without it?'

Shantideva says exactly the same thing in the Bodhicarya.

So what is the situation here? The bhikkhus have been abused by wanderers of other opinions. All right, that abuse has rather upset them, but how has it reached them? Through

the ear; through the sense, the organ, of hearing. But how do they come to have ears? Because they have bodies. How do they come to have bodies? They come to have bodies when they have come to have previous karmas - previous cravings, previous ignorance, previous samskaras, in a way. So it is because they have the body, equipped with ears, that they can hear the abusive speech, and in that way their minds become upset. So whose fault is it? It is not simply the fault of the people who are abusing, it is also the fault of those who are being abused. Because, as Shantideva says, referring to someone beating you: 'It isn't simply his fault, it is your fault too. He has taken the stick, you have taken the body.' It is when the two come together that you suffer. True, you would not have suffered if he had not taken the stick to your body, but it is also true that you would not have suffered if you had not taken your body to his stick.

Therefore, 'In village or forest, touched by weal or woe, Ascribe it not to self or to another.' It is not entirely your fault that you are suffering, but it is not also entirely due to other people. 'Contacts', in this case contact through the sense of hearing, 'assail because of body-base'. Contact is possible only because you already have a body. 'How [77] can they touch the one that is without it?' If you have no body, you can't hear any abuse. So your aim should be not to have any body, not to be reborn with a body with ears and senses generally through which you can be harmed and hurt.

This might be considered a rather negative point of view, but one should consider the practical function of this reflection, which is just to help you to control anger. It is in this context that Shantideva introduces that argument: don't be angry with someone else for harming you, because you are at least half responsible for your own painful experience. You should be as angry with yourself as with him. If you are not angry with yourself, you shouldn't be angry with him either. He has taken the stick, yes, but you have taken the body. He utters the abusive words, yes, but you have got the ear which hears those abusive words. So you are both responsible. The suffering can't arise unless both factors are there, and you are responsible for one of those two factors. He is no more responsible than you. So don't get angry with him, that is the practical message; don't be upset.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. On that occasion a certain lay-follower from Icchanangala had come to Savatthi on some business or other. Then that lay-follower, having finished his business in Savatthi, came to see the Exalted One. On coming to him he saluted him and sat down at one side. As he sat thus the Exalted One said this to that lay-follower: 'It is a long time, upasaka, since you took occasion to come this way.' 'For a long time past, sir, I have desired to come to see the Exalted One, but distracted by this or that business to be done I could not come.' Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

One who hath mastered dhamma, one much learned, Hath no such thought as: Ah! 'tis well with me! Look you! how tortured he that hath possessions! One to another human folk are bound."

S: Once again the udana, the verse, does not seem to be too closely connected with the actual episode. Once again, we are at Savatthi, and an upasaka, a lay follower, comes to see the Buddha. You notice this is the first time an upasaka appears in the Udana? We have had mention of bhikkhus before, but this is the first time an upasaka comes. An upasaka is here

simply one who is a follower or disciple of the Buddha but who stays at home. A bhikkhu is a disciple of the Buddha who is a wanderer; who either was a wanderer before he met the Buddha, and stays a wanderer after meeting him, or who becomes a wanderer and a bhikkhu at the time of his meeting with the Buddha, after hearing the Teaching. The upasaka is one who is a follower but who stays at home.

You notice the difference between the bhikkhu and the upasaka. [78] It is important to notice the difference. It is not that the bhikkhu has one kind of ordination and the upasaka has another kind of ordination. It is nothing to do with that at this stage, so far as the Udana is concerned, at least. The bhikkhus and the upasakas are both followers, but the bhikkhu is the follower who is a wanderer, who has no home, no family, and who moves about from place to place. The upasaka is the follower who lives at home with wife and family. But there is no question, really, of monk and layman, in the later sense, much less still of priest and layman in the Christian sense. They are both followers, but the bhikkhu followers are somewhat freer, the upasaka followers are somewhat more restricted, as we shall see in this episode.

: What does the word upasaka mean?

S: Upasaka is usually explained as one who practises upasana. Upasana is spiritual practice, including, or even especially, meditation - in the Upanishadic tradition, a particular kind of meditation, that is to say, meditation as a substitute for ritual. That is called upasana. So an upasaka, in Buddhist usage, is one who engages in spiritual practice, upasana.

It is also explained sometimes as meaning one who sits near - upa asana, one who practises upa asana or upasaka; that is to say, one who sits near a teacher, one who is a member of a spiritual tradition who is learning. Sometimes it means that. But it has the general significance of someone engaged in some kind of spiritual practice.

One can say that the distinction at this stage between bhikkhu followers and upasaka followers is not the distinction between monk and layman as it afterwards developed. It is more the distinction of the disciple who is a wanderer and the disciple who stays at home with wife and family and social responsibilities. Obviously the bhikkhu, the wanderer disciple, is freer than is the upasaka disciple. That is brought out, because the upasaka has come on business to Savatthi and takes advantage of the opportunity of seeing the Buddha, and the Buddha says, 'We haven't seen you for quite a long time.' And he says, 'I have desired to come' - I wanted to come - 'to see the Exalted One, but distracted by this or that business to be done I could not come.'

That is the position. The upasaka would like to see the Buddha and spend more time with him, but he can't; he is restricted in the way that the bhikkhu isn't. There is not a difference of principle between the bhikkhu and the upasaka. The difference is in the external circumstances though no doubt, and this also must be borne in mind, the upasaka, in the sense of the follower with wife and children and so on, has put himself into that situation - originally, at least. But they are equally followers of the Buddha, and later on we shall find examples of upasakas, and upasikas too, gaining high levels of spiritual development.

It is in this sense that we sometimes speak of the bhikkhu as the full-time follower and the upasaka as the part-time follower.

ABC: There is a bit of a danger, in a similar way, with the Order in London. You can get so involved in the mechanics.

S: Ah, but also the question arises: in what sense are mechanics mechanics? What are mechanics? There is also that.

[79]

ABC: It depends on the attitude...

S: Yes. Wanderers, even, can get involved in wandering, and wandering becomes an end in itself - just seeing new places, new villages; going over the whole of northern India.

Sagaramati: In a sense, there isn't a part-time follower, because you practise full-time.

S: In a sense, there isn't. There's part-time practice only to the extent that there are certain things which cannot be regarded, by any sort of casuistry, as constituting part of your practice - which are definitely unskilful - but as yet you are unable to disentangle yourself from them. But, obviously, the very nomenclature of full-time and part-time does contain possibilities of misunderstanding and even danger.

So the question really arises: what is the fundamental basis of distinction between the bhikkhu and the upasaka, or the monk and the layman? It is very important to understand this. For instance, we must also be careful that we don't have at the back of our minds any assumptions derived from Christian tradition. For instance, in orthodox Christianity - especially, say, in the Catholic church - the priest is entirely different from the layman, inasmuch as the priest has been consecrated a priest, and only he can celebrate the mass and administer the sacrament; a lay person cannot do that.

Devaraja: The same can apply to a Christian monk; a monk is quite likely not to have been consecrated in that particular way.

S: A Christian monk may not be a priest. If he is not a priest, he is dependent upon the priest for the sacraments in the same way that a layman is. And, in the same way, nuns, who cannot be priests, are dependent upon the secular priest for the sacraments.

The point I am making is that the priest is entirely different from the lay person. But that is not so of the distinction between the bhikkhu and the upasaka. It does not apply in that way. Therefore the question arises: what is the basis of the distinction? Both are followers of the Buddha, both Go for Refuge, both are committed. What is the basis of the distinction?

Subhuti: The degree of involvement and lifestyle.

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: The difference in the Precepts.

S: At this stage, there is no difference in Precepts. No Precepts, even, are mentioned. That is quite significant. Later on, the difference is indicated by the number and thoroughness of the Precepts observed. But this is a difference of degree, of course, not a difference of kind. The

lay person also observes certain precepts that the monk observes, (but the monk) observes more. But again, that is a difference of degree, not a difference of kind.

The only real difference, one can say, in terms of principle, is that, normally, other factors being equal, the bhikkhu will be a more wholehearted and more thoroughgoing follower of the Buddha, one who applies [80] (the Teaching) more completely, or one who makes his Refuge more effective. Even here, we have to be very careful about formalizing. For instance, I have given some examples in the past from the contemporary Buddhist world. Supposing, for instance, in a Theravada country an upasaka has retired from family life - though he is still an upasaka technically but he becomes a meditation teacher in a hermitage. Technically, according to the Theravada, he is just an upasaka. You might have, at the same time, someone who is technically a bhikkhu, a monk, who is working as a lecturer in a university, drawing a salary and maybe supporting a few relations out of that - maybe his old mother, or a brother or sister and who has his bungalow inside the university compound. So he is living, in a way, a secular life; but the Theravadins would regard him as the bhikkhu and the meditation teacher as the upasaka. But which is which, really, you may ask? One has to go by realities, not by conventions. In some parts of the Buddhist world, they do go by convention more than by the realities of the situation. So we have to try to avoid this.

In the Theravada countries today, the distinction is mainly that, if you are a bhikkhu, you have a certain kind of ordination, a monastic ordination, and if you are an upasaka you haven't. But this is not, in some cases, a very real basis of distinction. Very often, the man with the ordination is leading a quite secular life, and the man without it, in a few cases at least, may be leading a completely spiritual life; so their spiritual status is not in accordance with their technical ecclesiastical status. When you get that sort of discrepancy on too big a scale, it can be quite dangerous for the whole tradition.

There are differences of degree; degree of commitment, involvement and of the accordance of one's lifestyle with one's ideals. But I don't think one can, at present, categorize people as upasakas or bhikkhus too exclusively.

What about the verse? 'One who hath mastered dhamma, one much learned'. Of course, in the original, it says 'One who is bahusrutta', one who has heard much; not learned in the sense of 'read books'. 'Hath no such thought as Ah! 'tis well with me!' in a sort of worldly complacent sense. 'Look you! how tortured he that hath possessions! One to another human folk are bound.' So if there is any connection between this udana and the episode, we can say that the Buddha is reflecting how bound the poor upasaka is - that is to say, the man who wants to see the Buddha, wants to lead a spiritual life, but is very tied up with worldly responsibilities and with other people so that he is tortured by his possessions. In those days, it was probably more difficult than it is now, because the king might come along and confiscate everything that you had, and you couldn't do anything about it.

The Buddha is saying that one who has mastered the Dharma, who understands the Truth, who has received much spiritual instruction or has heard much from spiritual teachers, never thinks that all is well with him from a worldly point of view. He knows that having possessions is only a source of trouble, and that being involved with other people, in the usual worldly way, is simply a hindrance and a bondage. 'Possessions' can be understood in a psychological-cum-spiritual sense. In the Sutta-Nipata, a man of no possessions, a kincina, one who has nothing, is a synonym for the arhant. So the man with possessions is the man

who is not an arhant, you could even say an egotist; who has a lot, who has very substantial investment in craving, aversion and delusion and is drawing a good income from them!

The question also arises: at what point, precisely, can an upasaka be regarded as blossoming into the bhikkhu? It is quite difficult to [81] determine that point. It should not be just by way of a formal monastic ordination. Even bhikkhus had, even under the system prevailing in the Buddha's day, to be concerned with worldly things to some extent. At least the bhikkhus had to mend their robes in the Buddha's day; that is something that you often read - passing the time mending their torn robes, patching them and so on. You could regard that as worldly, not directly connected with anything spiritual. The practical question is at what precise point your involvement with the spiritual life becomes so thoroughgoing that you can be regarded as a bhikkhu rather than an upasaka, and whether that point should be associated with any formal recognition in the way of an ordination. But certainly in the time of the Buddha, and on the whole ever since, the upasaka was one who was still involved with family and social life, and worldly avocations in that sense; and the bhikkhu was one who was a wanderer, who had no family and no domestic responsibilities. But probably one should be cautious about speaking in terms of full-timer and part-timer, as though it was a question of external occupation rather than inner attitude - even though the inner attitude could eventually find expression externally. You can meet people who lead a very worldly life but say that they are monks at heart. But that isn't good enough.

: They wear the yellow robe within, as it were!

S: Right! Though, of course, as a spiritual principle there is an element of truth in it; it is just a question of who actually is saying that! But what you don't want in Buddhism is a sort of clergy or priesthood. In some parts of the Buddhist world, the bhikkhus have developed, at least a little, in that direction, and it is unfortunate. The bhikkhus in the Buddha's day were the mobile ones.

Of course, again, we must not forget this: a few hundred years later, or even less, they all settled down and most of them ceased to wander. The huts that they had occupied during the rainy season retreats - or just during the rainy season; it wasn't even a real retreat in those days - became large buildings and were eventually known as monasteries, and the monks then - by that time they were monks - lived in them all the time. They had parks and gardens round about, and even servants - even slaves in Ceylon, which was not at all a happy development.

You see the dangers, and how easy it is to settle down. Sometimes I think that we ought to revive the parivrajaka ideal and have some upasakas wandering from centre to centre all the time; fancy-free, in a spiritual sense. (Laughter.)

: We wouldn't have any centres then.

: You'd have everyone wandering around.

S: Well, you'd have to have centres so that some people could wander from centre to centre! I think it would be quite good if some people did move about from centre to centre, especially when we have more centres. In this way, they could circulate; maybe bring a little new life to the centres that they visited from time to time, or first-hand news of other centres, which is always good.

The important thing about the wanderers in those days - the bhikkhus, to the extent that they were wanderers - was that they were not settled in any one spot, whereas the upasakas were. They had to be because they [82] had families, and they could not be mobile in those circumstances.

Have any of you got any views on this, or have you had any thoughts or reflections upon this?

: What you said about Order Members wandering around is a very good idea. I've done that.

S: Well, you wandered up to Glasgow when I was there, didn't you, by train? (Laughter. Comments inaudible.) Well, even bhikkhus, even arhants in the Buddha's day, went flying through the air from place to place. (Voice: True!) It is the principle of the thing that counts. Mobility is mobility.

: But there's mobility and mobility.

S: We won't go into the mechanics.

: ... transferring directly information you gain about what's going on and you express it to another centre, which might be getting out of touch, or to another person.

: Especially private people living on their own, away from a Centre.

S: I think this is very important. Certainly the written word doesn't help very much, and the Newsletter helps very little in this way. I know myself now, because I think I am the only person in the Movement who has been around to all the centres now, and it is quite clear that, inasmuch as Order Members are not much in circulation among different centres, centre is to some extent cut off from centre, in the sense of there being no real living link or source of information about what is going on in other centres. So the personal contact is necessary. Letter writing helps, and the Newsletter helps a bit, but not really very much.

What sort of impression has anybody here, especially those who haven't heard anything from me, got about what is going on in Helsinki? - what the nature of the Movement is, the feel of it as it were, what is actually happening there. You can read in the Newsletter that they had a weekend retreat, but that doesn't really tell you anything at all about the people involved, the nature of the situation, what really happened. You would have to go and see or you would have to hear from someone who had been and seen for himself. We can't replace the personal contact. The media, however effective, can't substitute for personal contact. We haven't even got a radio station of our own, we have only got the Newsletter, or a few letters flying back and forth. That is not really enough.

: That is something I thought the other day would be really good - to get a radio licence and set up a small (station) and broadcast between centres, send messages.

S: That might help, but I still think you need the personal contact and some Order Members in circulation. Most Order Members know only one centre at all well. That could be a slightly dangerous situation. But neither do you want people rushing around so much that they don't know any centre well! Maybe you have your home or base centre, which you know better than any other, but you visit others from time to time. That would be very good.

[83]

: I think even that should be limited to some extent. Probably people shouldn't spend more than about three years in any particular centre, and then move on to another one, so they don't get a feeling of partisanship.

: Perhaps everyone should do a period of wandering ...

S: Yes. There are plenty of places to wander to; you could wander to New Zealand, to Helsinki; you will soon be able to wander to Holland.

_: (Two inaudible suggestions, greeted by laughter.)

S: ... Let me put in a good word for Norfolk - but don't wander up to my door without due warning, please! You could even wander down to Truro. Very few people wander down to Truro, and I think they need a bit of wandering.

: I think they are really out of touch there.

S: No, we are out of touch, don't just say that they are out of touch; we are out of touch with them, too. At least we are in touch with one another.

: I think that in a way they are out of touch with the general vigour that is occurring.

S: They probably are, yes; which means out of touch with us, though we are also out of touch with them. We don't really know what is happening there. It might be something very intense and positive that we are quite unaware of.

ABC: It is quite important when there are so many changes going on.

: When you go over to Holland, you might just remind them that there was going to be research on the possibility of us being free passengers on ships, or in ...

S: Who was this? (Inaudible reply.) I don't know whether he is still around. I am not myself very much in touch with Holland at the moment.

To sum up, this is the reason why, in the Western Buddhist Order, we place the emphasis entirely on the Going for Refuge, which is the common factor for the so-called full-timers and the so-called part-timers, the so-called monks and the so-called laymen, the so-called bhikkhus and the so-called upasakas. Those distinctions pale into insignificance in comparison with the fact that you are all Going for Refuge. I don't think you can formalize your commitment very much beyond that, not in the old way, partly because the world itself also is changing now. You can have mobile homes, which you couldn't in the Buddha's day. You can be a family man (as well as) a wanderer. You can do your work, even - your secular job - from your mobile home. So what are you? Are you a monk or are you a layman? Are you a wanderer or are you one of those of fixed abode? In the Buddha's day, the bhikkhus were the wanderers and the lay people stayed at home, but nowadays you have monks who stay at home, i.e. in monasteries, and lay people who wander around with families. So which is which? Which is monk, which is layman? So we can't take these things [84] as criteria any more; the important thing is the Going for Refuge, and you try to implement it as fully as you

can, according to your own circumstances.

Possibly a time may come when certain people as it were formalize their non-involvement with domestic and social life, and they will become what would virtually be bhikkhus or anagarikas or whatever. Probably there will be a need for that sooner or later.

: What is the need for it?

S: The need that it would probably help them if it was made explicit and public, in the same way as the Going for Refuge is. But obviously it can't be on the same level, as it were, or given the same importance as the Going for Refuge, that being the basis of everything. (Break in recording) ... the fully developed, typical monasticism.

: What is the modern Buddhist usage?

S: The modern Buddhist usage is one who observes the Refuges and Ten Precepts, lives like a bhikkhu, wears yellow robes but not of the orthodox patched kind, has no family and no secular job, but has not received monastic ordination, the bhikkhu ordination. You get a few of those, like Anagarika Dharmapala. Really, they are bhikkhus in the spiritual sense. They have just not received a formal ordination.

Devaraja: And why not?

S: Ah. The reason, in Dharmapala's case and that of a few others, is that, because they wanted to devote themselves to Buddhist work, it would not be possible to observe some of the extra rules of the bhikkhu. It seems absurd that, if you really want to help Buddhism and work for it, you can't become a bhikkhu because that would stop you working for Buddhism. That is the anomalous and absurd situation that results when you take rules too literally or when rules become out of date.

For instance, there is one rule that a bhikkhu mustn't ride in a cart behind a horse. Dharmapala was based in Calcutta and had to get out and about. He had to take an ekka, that is, a horse-drawn carriage, to convey him from place to place, but he would not have been able to do that if he had been a bhikkhu because of that rule. These rules are not nowadays observed by many bhikkhus, so that again alters the situation.

Subhuti: When does the maha-upasaka come in?

S: Rather late, only in medieval times. Maha-upasaka is used as a sort of courtesy title for senior upasakas quite early, but not (associated) with any specific duties or responsibilities.

: What were the responsibilities and duties?

S: Of maha-upasakas? General surveillance over other upasakas, keeping them together and helping them or giving them advice in the absence of any bhikkhu.

I think there may be a case for having anagarikas within the Order later on, and even having a sort of anagarika ordination ceremony, but this must never be allowed to become more important than the original [85] upasaka ordination, which mainly consists in the Going for

Refuge. If that ever was done, it would be a quite simple matter, because there is one little precept that makes the whole difference: if you change kamesu micchachara to abrahmacharya, then you are an anagarika. If you are celibate, if you don't have a wife and family, then you don't need a house, you don't need a job, and there you are. So one change of one little syllable makes all the difference.

Sona: What happens if you've got a wife and family anyway?

S: Well, then you wear the yellow robe within! But it is rather difficult to do that. It is like putting the tiger into the same cage as the lamb. The tiger might take a vow of vegetarianism, but it is rather difficult for him to observe it. It is much safer to put the lamb into one cage and the tiger into another - or into separate paddocks. Of course, I am not saying which is the lamb and which is the tiger!

No doubt there will always be intermediate cases and you can't always draw hard and fast lines of demarcation; they can only be approximate, rough and ready, for general purposes and for most cases. Because, at the other end of the scale, you have got married lamas, but they don't usually have any ordinary secular occupation; they are usually engaged in full-time teaching and the wife just housekeeps - looks after the disciples when they come for lectures and initiations; lays on all the food, does all the cooking. It can be quite convenient in certain instances. But he does have the worry of bringing up children at the same time. I have known married lamas who have had to postpone lectures and initiations because they have had to take their children to hospital, or their wife was sick, or something like that. It is rarely easy to combine the two, even for them. There are even henpecked lamas - but one mustn't say very much about that.

As I said, I think that, eventually, within the Order, a sub-Order of anagarikas will probably emerge; that is to say, people who have decided permanently to give up family life and social responsibilities in the ordinary sense and devote themselves completely to spiritual life and teaching. But that will be a comparatively minor development compared with the original first step of Going for Refuge and becoming an upasaka. It will be a sort of ordination within an ordination; not a higher ordination - that would be a great mistake. The highest ordination is the Going for Refuge.

: The important thing in that case would be the taking of the Precepts, whereas with the upasaka ordination the important thing is the Refuges, so after that you would just take the specific Precepts for specific situations?

S: Yes, right. The unfortunate development in the eastern Buddhist countries is that a slight change of Precepts is regarded as being far more important than the Going for Refuge. Because everybody Goes for Refuge formally, outwardly, automatically, by virtue of birth - which is the original distortion in that case. In the case of the anagarika, it would simply be a slight but quite important adjustment of Precepts, on the basis of the original Going for Refuge. So it would not be a new ordination, much less a higher or even further ordination, but a stricter or more specific application of one's original commitment.

[86]

I think the term anagarika is quite a good one. It also has the sanction of tradition, because it is in the Dhammapada. It is synonymous with bhikkhu there; it is the bhikkhu in the real

sense, not in the later, ecclesiastical, sense. It is the original bhikkhu, you could say; the bhikkhu of the Buddha's day. The feminine, by the way, is anagarika with a long 'a' at the end.

Sona: Do you get maha-anagarikas?

S: I suppose we could have. I have never heard of one; I have never come across the term, but you could have. Maha-anagarikas would be those who were very celibate indeed - beyond all possibility of being otherwise! (Laughter.)

ABC: This maha-upasaka - does the 'maha' suggest 'sunya'?

S: Not here, no. This is still, as it were, within the context of the Hinayana. It just suggests 'senior'.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now at that time the young brahmin wife of a certain Wanderer was with child and about to bring forth. Then that Woman-wanderer said to that Wanderer: 'Go you, brahmana! Fetch oil for my use at child-birth.' At these words that Wanderer replied: 'But whence can I get oil for your ladyship?' Then a second time she made the same request and he the same reply. And yet a third time she made the same request. Now at that time at the storehouse of the Rajah Pasenadi of Kosala there was given away to any recluse or brahmin of ghee or oil as much as he could drink without carrying any away. So that Wanderer with this idea: At the storehouse ... without carrying any away. Suppose I go to the storehouse of the Rajah Pasenadi of Kosala and drink as much oil as I can, then go home, vomit it up and offer it to my wife at her childbirth. Accordingly he did so. But having drunk the oil he could neither vomit it upwards nor pass it downwards, but was racked with violent pains, bitter and sharp, so that he rolled to and fro. Now the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi in quest of alms-food. There he saw that Wanderer assailed with violent pains, bitter and sharp, and rolling to and fro. Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Happy indeed are they who nothing own; The folk who have won wisdom nothing own. Look you! how tortured he who hath possessions! One to another human folk are bound."

[87]

S: Before we go on to the verse, let us look at a few general points. This is the first reference in the Udana to wanderers with families. As I mentioned yesterday, there were a few, though they tended to be the exception rather than the rule. It is interesting that they are brahmins and that a general spiritual restlessness affected the brahmins as well as the members of other castes.

We also notice, for the first time in the Udana, the coupling of brahmana and sramana. 'Now at that time at the storehouse of the Rajah Pasenadi of Kosala there was given away to any recluse or brahmin' - 'recluse' is sramana and brahmin is, of course, brahmana. We get this combination again and again throughout Pali literature: sramana-brahmana. It stands for religious folk in general. But each of the terms, sramana and brahmana, has a particular connotation. Sramana means a wanderer of non-Vedic tradition. The Buddha and his followers were sramanas. Mahavira and his followers were sramanas. The brahmins were those who adhered to the Vedic tradition and who performed especially the Vedic rites and

ceremonies, or who believed in brahminical law generally or in the supremacy of the brahmin caste. So sramana-brahmana is a sort of collective term which is constantly used in Pali literature. The authorities - as the king does in this case - usually treated both alike. The king is distributing as much ghee or oil to brahmins and sramanas alike as they can drink without carrying any away.

: Is sramanera ... ?

S: No, that is a quite different word. Literally, sramana means one who is washed or purified. It is the wandering ascetic of non-Vedic tradition, whereas the brahmana is the follower of Vedic tradition. Usually, of course, the brahmanas were settled. If a brahmin by caste became a Wanderer, like this one, it suggests that he has broken loose from the Vedic tradition and, though a brahmin by birth, he is, to all intents and purposes, a sramana. Sariputra and Moggallana were brahmins by birth, but sramanas as it were by adoption. The brahmanas tended to live with their wives and families; very often there were villages of brahmanas on land donated by the king. There they would live, earning money by performing their Vedic rites and teaching the brahminical traditions to young brahmins who came to them as students; whereas the sramanas usually wandered from place to place as parivrajakas, almost always without families, and did not perform any rites or ceremonies. You could say, very roughly, sramanas and brahmanas in ancient India were rather like friars and priests in the middle ages, if you could imagine the priests as being married - though often they had concubines anyway. The friars wandered about from place to place; being simply friars, they did not have to perform any religious ceremonies, whereas the priests stayed in one place attached to a particular church, performed mass for the faithful and various other ceremonies, like the marriage ceremony and so on. The friars did not do those things. The sramana-brahmana contrast was rather like that. You could say that the brahmins were the secular clergy, whereas the sramanas were the wandering ascetics.

You can see a need for both up to a point. Do you see what I mean? Society at large seems to require a body of men to perform the so-called secular or domestic ceremonies. There were lots of those, of course, for the ordinary Hindu, and the brahmin used to perform them. But in ancient India, the person who performed ceremonies of that sort was always sharply distinguished from the person who was devoted to spiritual development [88] and spiritual practice. Now for the verse. The verse does not have a very close connection with the episode, but the meaning is fairly clear:

'Happy indeed are they who nothing own.'

This in a way connects up with one of the earlier verses, where it was suggested that happiness did not consist in the satisfaction of craving but in the cessation of craving. So here it is stated that happiness consists not in owning things but in not owning things - not owning anything at all; that the less you own the more happy you are. Because things that you own, possessions, you have to bother about.

'The folk who have won wisdom nothing own.'

This line lifts the whole conception of being without possessions on to a higher level. I mentioned earlier the term for the arhant in the Sutta-Nipata: akinsina, which is translated there as 'man of naught' and is the same word as is used in the original here; the one who

doesn't own anything, who does not possess anything; the one who lays claim to nothing. It is not simply the one without physical, material possessions, as the wanderers were, but one who has no mental belongings, even, who has no opinions, no problems - who is problem-free, one could say, too. According to the footnote here, the commentary says that it means one who has no mental possessions in the form of craving, aversion and delusion, but that is perhaps a bit schematic. This sort of approach ties up very much with the Perfection of Wisdom approach in the Mahayana.

It is the conception of ownership that is referred to, rather than the actual possession of material things. If you don't have a conception of 'I' you won't have a conception of 'mine'. So, in the case of the wise man, he has seen through the illusion of 'I', and therefore he has also seen through the illusion of 'mine' and in that sense he is free from possessions.

Why do you think possessions are important to people?

Devaraja: Again, for the reason of confirming their existence. It's a kind of security, like 'I must be real, I must be happy, because look at all the things I've got.'

S: It also means that one exercises a certain power. They are your things, you control them. You can dispose of them as you wish.

I wonder if anyone has been in the position of not having any possessions at all, or got pretty near it?

: In India, (I got) pretty low on money.

S: It is quite an experience. I remember when I was in south India, and to some extent in the north, I did without money, which meant virtually doing without possessions, apart from the clothes I was wearing, for, I think, nearly three years. And if you've no money, you really don't have anything, because you can't fulfil your desire; as you feel like having something, if you've no money you can't. It is quite a strange state to be in. You do feel quite free, but you can at times feel quite impotent, because money is power. But it shouldn't be, or at least you shouldn't feel it as such.

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ABC: You tend to feel very open and at the mercy of ...

S: Yes, of circumstances and people; though, very often, in a very positive way. In India, people would often come up to you for the first time and say, 'Where have you come from?' and you say, 'From such-and-such a place.' 'Well, where are you staying tonight?' 'I don't know yet.' 'Well, come and stay with me. Have you eaten?' So this has a very positive side.

Devaraja: I find having little or no money almost puts one outside society. You can't participate in a lot of what society does. It is impossible.

S: Especially, no doubt, when one lives in the city. You can't even get from place to place unless you walk.

ABC: You even forget ... sometimes.

S: I remember once Ananda invited me to dinner when he was staying at Kensington. It got very late, and I missed the last tube train, and I wanted to get back to Highgate that same night. I didn't want to spend money on a taxi - I thought that was quite extravagant; the Movement was very poor indeed then. So I decided to walk back, and I was surprised how near it was, actually. It wasn't very far walking from Kensington to central London and then up to Highgate. It took only about two and a half hours. But one normally wouldn't think or dream of walking that distance inside London. I was surprised how near it was and how easily it could be done.

Also I noticed, when later on in India I started keeping and using money again, it seemed a very artificial and unnatural transaction - to have money in one's pocket and hand over these coins and pieces of paper and receive certain goods in return or in exchange. It seemed a very cumbersome operation.

ABC: Like magic, in a way.

S: Yes. Whereas usually we take it for granted; it's automatic, we don't think about it. But if you have not been using money for a while, you feel like that. I believe that, when people come out of prison, they feel like that; or even out of the army. In the army everything is done for you and you are looked after. You can even get on without money if you don't want to spend your pay. Some soldiers used to just let it accumulate and never draw it, so that when they were discharged or went home on leave, it would all be there for them. So they would do without money for a while - never actually have it, because everything was provided. So, even in those circumstances, when you start using money again, you can feel quite odd and unnatural. There are some things that you almost have to learn again.

This verse transposes all that - the concept of ownership and freedom from ownership - on to the intellectual and even the spiritual plane: that you don't own anything, you don't regard anything as yours. Therefore you cannot be threatened through anything which is not you. You don't even regard any ideas or views, or any ideology, as yours, so that, if an idea is attacked, you don't feel threatened or get upset. You can look at it all quite calmly and objectively.

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Therefore, the Buddha says:

'Happy indeed are they who nothing own; The folk who have won wisdom nothing own.'

That is to say that they are possessionless in the highest possible sense.

'Look you! how tortured he who hath possessions! One to another human folk are bound.'

So people are tortured who have possessions, not simply material possessions but even intellectual possessions, which they cling on to.

Why do you think this line follows: 'One to another human folk are bound'? How is that tied up with the question of possessions?

Devaraja: I wonder to what extent it is again this thing of being part of society in some way

and being connected, through all these possessions, with other human beings, and also directly connected with other human beings - being dependent on other human beings because of all these things.

S: One could also say that one regards other people as possessions. People are bound to one another because they regard one another as their possessions. Perhaps the extreme limit of possession or possessiveness is that with regard to human beings. That is why, in that verse of the Dhammapada that I quoted yesterday, the Buddha represents the fool, the spiritually immature person, as saying to himself, 'This son is mine. This wealth is mine.' He regards the boy as his son, one of his possessions, almost. That is a spiritually immature attitude.

Of course, what is suggested is not an attitude of cold indifference. That is the opposite extreme. (The suggestion is) to be warm, to be friendly, to be compassionate; but not to be possessive.

Any query on that episode or that verse?

: Just as a matter of interest, why would they not allow anybody to carry away oil? Was there any particular reason for that?

S: Perhaps the rajah just wanted to give everybody so much and he didn't want anybody to be greedy. He might have just a limited quantity, and was quite happy about sramanas and brahmanas consuming what they could on the spot, but if he had allowed them to take it away they would probably have come with great pots and pitchers, and it would all quickly have gone and some people would have got none.

Sona: Why would they want to drink oil?

S: Indians use it in cooking a lot. They are very fond of oil, though they prefer ghee or clarified butter.

Sona: It just seems strange that they should be asked to drink it.

S: It does rather, doesn't it? Well, kings used to have these crazy notions that no one dared to question. They were happy enough that he was going to give something away at all.

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: It is very difficult to have any kind of relationships with people without some subtle form of possessiveness or obligation coming in.

S: Yes. Why do you think that is? It is probably for the same general reason - not feeling complete in oneself; needing bolstering up from outside, by things, by people, by position.

Just as a purely practical question: what do you think should be the attitude of upasakas towards possessions, especially material possessions? Should any actual limit be recognized? What should be their attitude towards property of various kinds?

ABC: It depends on how they are using it.

S: But do you think one can always trust oneself to use it properly?

: I should think that having possessions is one possible...

Devaraja: Staying within objective needs ...

: It also helps to see one's possessions as being at the disposal of the Movement as a whole, so that if they are required in any way, fair enough, because you ...

S: There is, of course, this well-known difficulty with regard to collective property. Collective property tends to be nobody's property and therefore not to be looked after. So perhaps it is more important, not that one should have no property, but that one's property should be at the disposal of the Movement. Meanwhile, one looks after it, and no doubt one is the best person to do that, because you still have a subtle sense of ownership so you look after it properly. But it is only a subtle sense, so when the call comes you are ready to relinquish (the property).

Devaraja: It is very difficult, sometimes - for instance, with things like brushes and so on.

S: Painting or shaving?

Devaraja: Painting. I think it would be a mistake to lend things like that out.

S: You mean to indiscriminating, clumsy people?

Devaraja: Mm.

ABC: It gets a bit like that with books, as well.

S: Indeed, yes! I have many a grievance there. They come back with tea stains on them and pages turned down.

Subhuti: Or not at all.

S: Or not at all. We did have a lending library some years ago at the centre, but it didn't work at all well. Books usually didn't come back, and Friends in those days being very fluid, often the people themselves didn't come back.

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Is there any other point here, either on the episode or the verse?

Sagaramati: It seems that here, too, there is this idea that he takes the oil and thinks that he won't be attached to it, as it were. He comes to give it up and he can't give it up.

S: Without pressing the point too much in an artificial way, this is perhaps a bit symbolical. There is something a little like it later on, as we shall see. He can neither vomit it upwards nor pass it downwards. There is an Indian fable in this connection: the fable of the snake that swallows the frog, but the frog is too big for it to swallow. It can't digest the frog - swallow it down - and it can't vomit it up, so it chokes. So sometimes one is in this position: you can neither digest - or assimilate, something, nor can you give it up. You are sort of stuck with it.

In a way, it is a bit like the Wanderer's position, quite literally. He was a wanderer, but then he was lugging round a wife, too; so it is as though he could neither get into the wandering life nor not give it up. He was stuck halfway between. That is reflected in his being unable either to pass the oil he had swallowed downwards or to vomit it up. Perhaps it is a sort of allegory, in a way, though no doubt it actually did happen or could have happened. He is halfway between, neither one thing nor the other, neither hot nor cold; he is neither a householder nor is he a wanderer.

: He is trying to have his cake and eat it.

S: Yes, and it is choking him. So he is neither having it nor eating it. Perhaps there is some suggestion of that. I am inclined to think that there is, because, going through the Udana, one feels that the compilers, whoever they were or whoever he was, were quite subtle-minded. There are interesting little juxtapositions and contrasts. It is as though the whole thing has been rather carefully and thoughtfully edited. I got that impression quite strongly the last time we went through the Udana.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now at that time the only son, dear and delightful, of a certain lay-follower had died. And a great number of lay-followers, with clothes and hair still wet (from washing), came to visit the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. As they sat thus the Exalted One said to those lay-followers: 'How is it, upasakas, that ye come here at an unseasonable hour?' At these words that lay-follower said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, my only son, dear and delightful, has died. That is why we come with hair and clothes still wet at an unseasonable hour.' Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

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In bondage to the dear and sweet, many a deva, many a man, Worn with woe, submit themselves to the Lord of Death's command. But they who, earnest night and day, cast aside the lovely form, They dig up the root of woe, the bait of Death so hard to pass."

S: This must have been a very common incident in ancient India, as it is even in modern India: somebody's son dies. The infant mortality rate is very high there even now. So what happens? The body is cremated and, according to the ancient Indian belief, which is still quite strongly held, having anything to do with death or with a dead body pollutes one. So, after cremating a dead body, you all have to go and have a dip in the river. Often, of course, the cremation is held on the bank of a river. So you dip in the river, and the Indian practice is that you dip with all your clothes on; you dip yourself right under. So you come up with your clothes and your hair streaming wet.

That was the situation. An upasaka's son had died, and he and all his brother upasakas - not women, mind you; women never take part in cremations, only the men - after they had cremated that upasaka's son, went to see the Buddha at an untimely hour - that is, early in the morning before the midday meal. No doubt the child had died during the night, so the cremation was held first thing in the morning; they all took a dip in the river and then, with their hair and clothes still wet, went to see the Buddha, and he inquired why they had come at an unseasonable hour and they told him. Then the Buddha, seeing the meaning of it, gives utterance to this udana:

'In bondage to the dear and sweet, many a deva, many a man, Worn with woe, submit themselves to the Lord of Death's command.'

We notice, as we saw earlier on, that the attachment here is to the son: another example of the same kind of thing. 'The only son, dear and delightful, of a certain lay-follower had died.'

So,

'In bondage to the dear and sweet, many a deva, many a man, Worn with woe, submit themselves to the Lord of Death's command.'

In other words, due to their attachment to other human beings, especially perhaps to their own children, they develop a strong attachment to existence as such. Then, when they die, under the law of karma, back they have to come.

'But they who, earnest night and day, cast aside the lovely form, They dig up the root of woe, the bait of Death so hard to pass.'

To 'cast aside the lovely form' does not mean literally cast the form itself aside, but to cast aside one's attachment to that form. So 'they who, earnest night and day' - those who are meditative and mindful night and day and who get over their attachment to the attractive form - 'They dig up the root of woe' - they get rid of the cause of suffering which is 'the bait of Death so hard to pass'.

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This is a quite simple, straightforward little episode, though at the same time quite important.

: Why have they come to see him anyway? What do they want?

S: Maybe some consolation. Or perhaps they thought that as they were in the area anyway they might as well go and see the Buddha. Perhaps they weren't going to do any work that day. But more likely it was because they wanted some consolation. You will find the same sort of thing happening once or twice again in the course of the Udana. Is there any query on that?

: I don't understand 'the bait of Death'.

S: 'The lovely form' is 'the bait of Death'. Death is out to ensnare you, to trap you. So in his trap he puts a lovely form so that you will be attracted by that and fall into his power through the operation of the law of karma. 'So hard to pass' refers to Death - that is to say, the whole process of birth and death and rebirth is 'hard to pass', that is, hard to overcome, hard to escape from on account of one's attachment, especially one's attachment to those who are dear to one in the ordinary worldly way.

: The sentence 'They dig up the root of woe' seems rather good.

S: Yes. This is a quite common Pali idiom, the digging up of the root of woe or suffering. You don't merely cut it down; you dig up the root. It is also quite important, because one could say that in therapy one just trims the leaves a bit, whereas in the spiritual life you really

dig down and dig up the root. So digging up the root of dukkha, not merely trimming the external manifestations, is quite important. By a slight mixture of metaphors - overlapping of metaphors, perhaps - the root is also the bait.

Section viii is rather a long one, but it is like a story, so we will go straight through it, and then consider the whole episode at the end.

"Thus have I heard. On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Kundiya, in Kundadhana Grove. Now at that time Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, had for seven years been with child, and was now for the seventh day in travail. She, though assailed with grievous, sharp, bitter, harsh pains, kept her mind upon three thoughts, thus: Rightly awakened indeed is the Exalted One, who teaches dhamma for the abandoning of such pain as mine. Rightly faring on the Way indeed is the Exalted One's order of disciples, which fares on to abandon such pain as mine. True bliss indeed is nibbana, wherein no such pain as mine is known. Now Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, thus addressed her lord:

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'Come, good my lord! Go you to the Exalted One, and on coming to him worship in my name with your head at the Exalted One's feet and inquire as to his health and well-being, his bodily vigour, strength and comfort in living, and say, "Sir, Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, worships with her head at the Exalted One's feet, and inquires as to the health and well-being, the bodily vigour, strength and comfort in living of the Exalted One"; and do you add this: "Sir, Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, has for seven years been with child, and is now for the seventh day in travail. She, though assailed ... with grievous pains ... keeps her mind upon three thoughts..." 'Very good,' replied that Koliyan to Suppavasa, and went to visit the Exalted One. On coming to him he saluted the Exalted One and sat down at one side. So seated he repeated the words of his wife. And the Exalted One said: 'May it be well with Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah. May she in health give birth to a healthy son.' (As soon as the Exalted One said this, Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, was well, and in health brought forth a healthy son.) 'So be it, sir,' said the Koliyan, rejoicing at the Exalted One's words; and thanking him he rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with the right side and started off for his home. There the Koliyan beheld Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, well and in good health, having brought forth a healthy son. On seeing this he thought: It is wonderful indeed! It is marvellous indeed! The mighty, miraculous power of the Wayfarer, in that Suppavasa, at the very words of the Exalted One, became well and in health brought forth a healthy son. Thereat he was pleased and happy, full of joy and content. Then Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, said to her lord: 'Come, good my lord! Go you to the Exalted One, and on reaching him in my name worship with your head at the Exalted One's feet and say this: "Sir, Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, was for seven years with child and was in labour seven days. But now it is well with her, and in health she has brought forth a healthy son. She now invites the order of monks to food for seven days. O sir, let the Exalted One accept the seven days' food of Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, along with the order of monks.'" 'Very good,' replied the Koliyan to Suppavasa, and went to the Exalted One (and repeated her message and invitation)... Now at that time the order of monks, headed by the Buddha, had been invited for that day's meal by a certain lay-follower, and that lay-follower was a supporter of the venerable Moggallana the Great. So the Exalted One called to him: 'Come hither, Moggallana! Do you go to that lay-follower and say to him: "My good sir, Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah ... was for [96] seven days in travail. Now ... she has invited the order of monks headed by the Buddha to seven days' food." Let

Suppavasa give her seven days' food, and then that supporter of yours can give his afterwards.' 'Very well, sir,' replied the venerable Moggallana the Great to the Exalted One, and went to that lay-follower and said: 'My good sir, Suppavasa, the daughter of the Koliyan rajah ... has invited the order of monks ... let her give her seven days' food. Afterwards you can give yours.' 'Sir, if my lord Moggallana the Great will stand surety for me in three things, to wit, wealth and life and faith, then let Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, give her seven days' food, and afterwards I'll give mine.' 'For two things, my good sir, I'll be your surety; but as for faith, you are surety for yourself.' 'Well, sir, if in two things, to wit, wealth and life, my lord Moggallana the Great will stand surety for me, then let Suppavasa give her seven days' food, and afterwards I'll give mine.' Accordingly the venerable Moggallana the Great persuaded that lay-follower and went to the Exalted One, and on coming to him said this: 'Sir, that lay-follower has been persuaded by me. Let Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, give her seven days' food. He will give his afterwards.' So Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah, for seven days served the order of monks, headed by the Buddha, with choice food, both hard and soft, with her own hands, and satisfied them and made them eat their fill. And she caused that child to salute the Exalted One and the whole order of monks. Then the venerable Sariputta said to that child: 'Well, child, are you at ease? Have you food enough? Have you any pain?' 'How, Sariputta, could I be at ease? How could I have food enough? I have spent seven years in a vessel of blood!' Then thought Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah: My boy is conferring with the Captain of Dhamma. Thereat she was pleased, delighted, full of joy and satisfaction. Then the Exalted One said this to Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliyan rajah: 'Would you like, Suppavasa, to have another such son?' 'Exalted One, I would like to have seven other such sons.' Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Sorrow disguised as joy, hateful as the loved, Pain in the form of bliss the heedless overwhelms."

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S: There are several points in that little story. First of all, this is the first reference in the Udana to the Three Jewels as such, as a group or triad. Do you notice that? It says that Suppavasa, 'though assailed with grievous, sharp, bitter, harsh pains, kept her mind upon three thoughts, thus: Rightly awakened indeed is the Exalted One, who teaches dhamma for the abandonment of such pain as mine. Rightly faring on the Way indeed is the Exalted One's order of disciples, which fares on to abandon such pain as mine.' So she has referred to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. That is the first time that they have been mentioned together, as a group. So perhaps this episode represents a slightly more developed form of the Buddha's movement and teaching.

Subhuti: Even though they are not actually considered as a threesome?

S: No, they aren't. Well, they are mentioned in that order: the Buddha, then the Dharma, and then the Sangha.

Devaraja: What is the significance of the seven years?

S: Seven seems to be an indeterminate period, a long time, though it can be taken literally. The Indians, of course, love to exaggerate. The fact of the matter seems to have been that this woman was pregnant for an unusually long time and had an unusually difficult delivery, and

out of her faith in the Buddha appeals to him to help her. This sort of thing is very common in India and the East generally today. Sadhus and holy men are believed to possess these magic powers to help one in that way. It is a very ordinary or representative, typical situation. We need not take that seven years literally, or even the seven days; but no doubt, as I said, she was pregnant an unusually long time and had an unusually difficult delivery, so she sent her husband to the Buddha to ask for his blessing at that critical time, and apparently the Buddha's blessing worked; so she was correspondingly very grateful.

How does she show her gratitude to the Buddha and his disciples? By doing for them the only thing that she can do for them: to supply them with food. So she invites them, for seven days running. This was a not uncommon practice, and you find it in the Buddhist countries of the East even today, that you invite a number of bhikkhus to your house for their midday meal for a certain number of days if you want to celebrate some special occasion. So after she recovered - the text does not say how long after; it suggests almost immediately, but it could have been some days, weeks, months or even years - or we can regard the boy's speaking as a sort of miracle, that a boy of a few days old actually started speaking - or the feast could have been some years later, when the boy was able to speak. We are not definitely told this. But the Indian mind, even the Indian Buddhist mind, is always prone to the marvellous, the miraculous, the extraordinary.

So, out of gratitude, she invites the Buddha and his company of disciples to eat at her house from her hands for seven days in succession. But what is the situation? There is a prior invitation, and it was a convention among the Buddha's followers - it afterwards was made into a rule - that you couldn't reject a prior invitation in favour of a later one. What do you think the reason for this was?

ABC: So that there was no jealousy.

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S: So that there was no jealousy, and also so that the monks might not be tempted to reject a poor man's prior invitation in favour of, say, a rich man's subsequent one. So they had to accept invitations in the order in which they were given, unless the people inviting agreed among themselves to change the order. So when Suppavasa gave her invitation, apparently the Buddha and his disciples had already been invited by a lay devotee, who was a supporter of the Venerable Moggallana, so he had to be asked to give up his priority before they could accept Suppavasa's invitation. So Moggallana raised the matter with him. What does he say? The humour of it doesn't come out very well in the translations. He says: 'All right, if you'll guarantee three things: wealth, life and faith. If you can guarantee that in a week's time I shall still have enough money to be able to feed you, and also if I am still alive, and also if I still have faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, then OK.' That is what he is saying.

Moggallana also has a sense of humour. He says, in effect: 'By virtue of my mighty magic power I can guarantee two things. I can guarantee that you will still have the money and I can guarantee that you will still be alive. But only you can guarantee that you will still have the faith. That depends upon you. That is beyond the sphere of my magic power to guarantee.' Then the follower says, 'All right. I'll be my own surety for the faith if you look after the other two.'

This, although a humorous little incident, stresses the importance of one's own faith; that

nobody else has any control over that. Even Moggallana can't guarantee the man's faith. It is only he himself who can guarantee that. He is responsible for his own faith. Moggallana can assume responsibility for this wealth, even for his life, but not for his faith. He is the only one who can guarantee that.

So in this way the invitations are switched and Suppavasa entertains the Buddha and his disciples to a meal. She serves them with her own hands, food both hard and soft - hard, baked things and also soft rice and curries - and makes them eat their fill. Then she causes the child to salute the Exalted One. This is still the custom in Buddhist countries; they bring in the small children and make them salute the monks - even babies; they bump their heads on the floor in front of the monks, and sometimes they cry. This is a very common scene. So if we assume that the child, by the time of the invitation, is already old enough to speak, then there is no need to assume any miracle.

So Sariputta, who is known as the Dhammasenapati, the commander-in-chief of the Dharma, the Buddha's leading disciple, enters into conversation with the child and makes the usual sort of polite inquiries, and the child is represented as saying, 'How could I be at ease? How could I have had food enough? Think of all that terrible time I was in the womb!' Maybe his mother has been telling him all sorts of horror stories about it and the child has picked it up. But the proud mother is very pleased indeed to see her son so precociously entering into conversation with the Buddha's leading disciple. The Buddha sees this, and asks her, 'Would you like to have another such son?' - 'You are so pleased with your son and so proud of him that, even though you had so much pain and difficulty, do you still want to have another son?' And she says, 'I would like to have seven!'

What does that convey?

Subhuti: She had forgotten what she'd been through.

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S: She had forgotten, yes. That is what the Buddha says:

'Sorrow disguised as joy, the hateful as the loved, Pain in the form of bliss the heedless overwhelms.'

'You forget all the sorrow, suffering and difficulty and you would go through the whole thing all over again - not only willingly but overjoyed to do so.' She does not even say, 'Yes, for the sake of another such son, I think I would go through it all again.' No: 'Seven!' She is so greedy, almost; she has such a lust for sons. There is no mention of daughters, you notice.

This sort of thing often happens. After some painful experience, people say, 'Never again! I am never going to do that again. I am never again going to allow myself to get into that sort of situation.' Anyway, within a few weeks, there they are again, in the same situation, the same pattern repeating itself once more, for the tenth or twelfth time. It is this that the episode is getting at. You forget once it's all over. Hope triumphs over experience, as Dr Johnson said with regard to second marriages. Hope - one is rather deluded by it - is always triumphing over experience.

Are there any general points on that episode, the story as a whole?

ABC: Yes, who was this woman's husband? It says 'the Koliyan'.

S: He seems to be rather an insignificant character. He is not even mentioned by name. Suppavasa was presumably rather an important lady because she was a daughter of the Koliyan rajah - the Kolis being a tribe or community in north-western India. They may even have been republican and it may be that there was a sort of oligarchy, a sort of council all the members of which were called rajah. I am not sure of that.

Devaraja: A bit like Roman senators?

S: Yes. So she was clearly the daughter of a prominent man, and she was married to a Koliyan, a member of the same community, but possibly he was of less social consequence than she was, and we are not even told his name. She is clearly represented as ordering him to do this and do that, and he goes and does it, quite obediently. So maybe she was the stronger character of the two, or maybe she was even the head of the household, inasmuch as she was the daughter of a rajah. We are not given his actual name; he doesn't seem to be of any importance - no more than a messenger boy.

Several strong-minded ladies appear in the Pali Scriptures, I should warn you. We are going to come across the most strong-minded of them all, Visakha, later on. She has gone down in history as the upasika who compelled the bhikkhunis to wear bathing costumes instead of bathing naked in the stream. She had a strong sense of propriety.

This episode represents very much the attitude of the average lay devotee towards the spiritual teachers. There is faith. Suppavasa has a certain amount of faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Even in the midst of her pain, she remembers them. But she is concerned more with invoking blessing, with magical protection. This is very much the attitude of the average lay Buddhist in many eastern Buddhist lands - they are not interested so much in the teaching but they believe that, yes, these are holy men; they have certain magic powers; they can help, they [100] can protect, they can bless. So, when you get into difficulties at certain critical junctures of life, you ask for that blessing and hope that it will help you, or perhaps you have faith that it actually will, that it really works. But you are not so much concerned to follow the teaching.

You notice Suppavasa is not described even as an upasika. She has a certain amount of faith in the Buddha, but she is not, strictly speaking, a disciple, even a lay disciple.

Colin: That seems to be quite a contrast to the first chapter that we went through - what is said here about the attitude of the lay devotees compared to the first chapter, which is all definitions of a true brahmin. Is that intentional?

S: I think it reflects the fact that, in the India of that day, as in the world generally, there is a minority of people who are concerned with the actual realization of the spiritual ideal, and a majority who are prepared to accord it a certain respect and even believe in it, but not really for what it actually is, more for its magical side effects which can sometimes be harnessed to their mundane benefit. To the ordinary Indian, who believed in holy men and in magic and blessings, the Buddha was not so much the Enlightened one as the great magician, the great wonder worker, the great source of blessings and miracles. This was very much their attitude.

You find this in India, and maybe throughout the East, even today. If you go round India as a sadhu or holy man, people often come up to ask for worldly advice or a worldly blessing, or to tell their fortune, to read their palm. This is very common. They are not so much concerned with the teaching and following that teaching, but with some blessing for them in their ordinary worldly life. Though the Buddha did not object to this - he is always represented as quite prepared to give his blessing - that was not his principal function. But most ordinary people saw it as his principal function. Even today, the average Indian has this sort of faith in spiritual teachers and spiritual masters, not as spiritual teachers or spiritual masters but as sources of magical blessing. Perhaps that is rather difficult for us in the West to realize, because we have got so far away from that sort of set-up, but it is very primitive and was very widespread until quite recently. The modern West is, in a way, abnormal in that respect.

Devaraja: Generally speaking, is it important for us to discourage any lay attitude (of that sort)?

S: In a way, there is no room in Buddhism for a laity of that sort, if you take Buddhism in a strict spiritual sense. Otherwise we could spend our whole time giving blessings and sprinkling holy water. I found, when the ex-Untouchables were converted to Buddhism, we had to be very careful about this, otherwise our principal occupation was presiding over weddings, blessing married couples and naming babies. People are much more interested in that than hearing about the Dharma. Becoming Buddhists meant, for many of them, if not most, a new kind of priest, doing things in a different way; a better way, they believed, because they weren't Hindus any more, they were out of the caste system; but you were just another kind of priest for the majority, and especially for the women. They were not so much into the teaching, if at all.

This is a sort of ethnic value, and historically Buddhism has gone [101] along with it to a great extent. But it is rather inappropriate under modern conditions.

: This correspondence I had with this man... in Hong Kong... He kept saying that there should be a sort of bhikkhu Sangha... and I feel quite strongly that it is inappropriate for several reasons, in that there is a danger of people assuming that they can't spiritually practise unless they are a bhikkhu, which was what he was implying.

S: But it is even worse than that. It is recruiting people to be bhikkhus, who lead a very ascetic life, and especially if they are celibate, and as a result of that (it is believed that) they develop or gain certain magical powers, and with those powers they can bless you in your ordinary worldly life and ensure worldly success for you. Therefore, in some of the Theravada countries especially, you get this division of labour, almost, between the Sangha and the laity. The monks have to lead very ascetic lives and develop magical powers for the benefit of the lay people, who have no intention of leading a spiritual life and don't even try, but who are prepared to support the monks in return for the blessing.

: The point I made in this letter, though, was that it would be almost like a blood sacrifice: that somebody would become a bhikkhu and therefore would lead the holy life for one.

S: Well, it is like that sometimes. I have talked frankly with Sinhalese bhikkhus about this. I remember meeting quite a few of them in Calcutta. One especially was a very good friend of mine. Some of them were put into the Order when they were small boys, as sramaneras first,

and some of them were very bitter about it. One of them one day really let off steam and said, 'I feel very angry about it. My parents thrust me into the Sangha as a boy just to earn merit for them and to help them go on living a sinful life. They don't care about the Dharma at all.' Because Sinhalese Buddhists believe that if you give a son to the Sangha it is a tremendous gain for you as regards merit, and they do not usually consider the boy's wishes - that was the old system - so, quite literally, he is sacrificed. Some of the monks who are involved in the system and unable to get out are quite bitter about it. But that, surely, was not the Buddha's intention.

We must not forget that in the East you get this devoted pseudo-laity, who are not Buddhists in the sense of wanting to follow the teaching within the context of their lay life except to a minimal extent, but are concerned with getting a blessing from the monks so that they may prosper, have children, acquire wealth, and have long life. They are much more concerned with those things; it is those things that they want from the monks, not teaching. The monks are sort of super-magicians in their eyes, wonder-workers. And the monks, it must be said, in some cases encourage this because their support depends upon it. That is the system.

: Do you think something like this may have happened in the case of Christianity? Perhaps Christ may have stressed much more the idea of individual development and this was played down later.

S: Undoubtedly. Perhaps he did not speak so much in terms of individual development as Buddhism does, but there is no doubt that the clergy, in later centuries, took on those functions. [102] That is why I feel, when we are called upon to celebrate weddings and so on, that we are not really fulfilling a specifically Buddhist function at all. It is not a direction I am very happy about. If we are not careful, we may become a sort of social group, with Buddhist wedding ceremonies, Buddhist name-giving ceremonies, Buddhist christenings and what not, and gradually the spiritual side will be lost.

Devaraja: It was quite amusing once. A Ramakrishna Vedanta devotee rang up Ayratara, to ask for a token Buddhist to go along with the Muslims, Christians etc. to bless his child in a name-giving ceremony. I put him on to the Thai temple. It was really a classic example of this sort of attitude. Really he didn't give a damn about the Dharma. He just wanted to acquire some extra magic from as many traditions as possible for the benefit of his child.

S: All the wonder-working folk, yes. I used to find this in India. On Independence Day they would round up a Christian priest and a Muslim mulvi and a Hindu swami and a Buddhist bhikkhu, and they would all have to recite passages from the Scriptures for the prosperity of India. The government even published a little book with the texts from the different religions and would get a priest of each religion to read his bit in the Independence Day celebrations. In the end, I refused to participate; I would not have anything to do with it. It was purely ethnic. Sure, it's good that the country should be prosperous and happy and that people should work for the country, for social improvement and material prosperity; that's fine. But it is not the business of the spiritual tradition to be harnessed to that end.

We must not forget that, historically, even at present in the East, this sort of thing plays a big practical part in so-called Buddhist life. There doesn't seem any need for it, really, so far as Buddhism in the West is concerned. The majority of Buddhist monks in the East are mainly occupied with semi-magical functions.

Devaraja: It is perhaps almost something to be discouraged. If I can make a distinction between disciple and devotee, in a way we have got to discourage the devotee very thoroughly indeed.

S: You are quite right. I had plenty of experience of devotees at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, mainly in the form of old ladies coming with big boxes of chocolates. They were not really interested in the Dharma at all. Yes, it is the devotee rather than the disciple. Suppavasa, here, is a good example, almost a classic example, of the devotee, not the disciple. Some Hindu gurus nowadays make a sharp distinction between their devotees and their disciples. Devotees are called bhaktas, disciples are called shishas (?). If some gurus are asked, 'How many disciples have you?' they may say, 'Well, two or three disciples, but I have many thousands of bhaktas or devotees.' Many of them make the distinction quite clearly. Devotees are those who bring one food, make offerings or contribute money, and they want a blessing for success in their ordinary worldly life. They are not concerned with spiritual development. But they have a function inasmuch as they keep the whole thing going organizationally, so it's a rather shaky foundation in a way because you have to pander to their needs and their attitudes to a great extent.

Were any of you unaware of this aspect of traditional, conventional [103] Buddhist religious life in the East, or were you aware of it?

: Unaware.

S: Yes, it's not surprising.

Devaraja: I think this devotee attitude is encouraged by the south-east Asian Buddhist (set-up) in London, like the Thai temple or the Sinhalese temple.

S: For some reason, you don't get it in the same sort of way among the Tibetans. It is quite strange, but you don't.

: Can you give any reason for that?

S: I don't know - maybe it depends on the Tibetan national character, or maybe it is the difference in the whole Mahayana attitude. I think in the case of the Theravadins and south-east Asian Buddhism generally, it has a lot to do with the hard-and-fast distinction that has developed between the so-called lay community and the so-called monastic community; whereas, in the case of Tibet, which is mainly a Vajrayana country, all are united to the Bodhisattva ideal. Everybody accepts the same ideal and is trying to practise it in varying degrees.

This also links up with the question of the 'born Buddhist'. Sometimes people in Asian countries will tell you that they are born Buddhists. But you can't be any such thing. The devotees are mostly the 'born Buddhists', or the 'born Buddhists' are the devotees.

: And yet the Buddha seems to have had quite a number of devotees.

S: The Buddha seems to have accepted that situation, inasmuch as he seems to have given everybody whatever he could. That seems to have been his attitude, as far as we can tell. But

clearly the disciples figure much more prominently in the Scriptures. He gives his main attention to them. But he certainly doesn't go against the other aspects. It is interesting to see what he says in Suppavasa's presence, quite clearly:

'Sorrow disguised as Joy, the hateful as the loved, Pain in the form of bliss the heedless overwhelms'.

: Yes, it's quite clear there.

S: He is quite blunt.

: And to the upasakas in the previous one as well.

S: Yes, and you notice that Suppavasa is not addressed as 'upasika'. She is addressed simply as 'Suppavasa', whereas in the previous section the upasakas were addressed as upasakas by the Buddha. He said, 'How is it, upasakas, that ye come here...?' That is quite significant. In ancient India, in the Buddha's time, they were very punctilious about modes of address and how they spoke to people. This is reflected in the Pali Canon, and it is never without meaning, so it is quite significant that in the previous section the people who come at an unseasonable hour are addressed [104] as 'upasakas'. Yes, they are upasakas, they are lay disciples. But Suppavasa is not so addressed. She apparently, therefore, is regarded as what we might call a lay devotee, not a lay disciple. The Buddha chooses his language carefully.

You notice, in many parts of the Pali Canon, the modes of address are quite elaborate and quite significant. For instance, brahmins are represented as always addressing the Buddha as 'Gotama', just by his ordinary clan name, with no honorific at all. Sometimes it is 'Po Gotama' - 'Sir Gotama', but his own disciples and followers always address him as 'Bhagavan', never as 'Gotama'. And a change of attitude is sometimes expressed in a change in the mode of address. A haughty brahmin starts off by addressing the Buddha as 'Gotama' but ends up by addressing him as 'Bhagavan'. So these things can be noted.

In Helsinki there is, or was, this sort of problem of the devotees. Quite a few people were coming to the classes who could be classified as devotees. They were quite sympathetic and helpful in some ways, and quite kindly, but they belonged to other groups, mostly theosophists and spiritualists, and had no real interest in Going for Refuge or committing themselves to Buddhism, or practising, really. They didn't usually even want to meditate. But they were quite happy with the group. Vajrabodhi felt them as a bit of a threat to the Friends group there at its current stage of development. They were friendly people, but definitely devotees rather than potential disciples.

Has anybody any thoughts on this topic?

Devaraja: It suddenly comes to mind that this is the question of fundraising. Obviously, in the East, fund-raising (appeals are) directed mainly to devotees, but I am quite conscious that when we approach people in the West you can't rely on trying to appeal to their - you have to somehow make them interested in what you are doing for themselves, not ...

S: Yes, or to accept it in principle, that it is a good thing, even though they are not actually involved or participating.

Devaraja: You can't appeal to any sort of devotee-like impulse.

S: No, you can't say, '(If you give) it's good for business.'

It would probably pay off in the long term, but in the short term ...

S: In the short term, it's hard work. At the same time, one should not dismiss completely what I call the magical element. One might even quite honestly believe that the Buddha's blessings were quite effective, but the magical is not the spiritual.

You saw this sort of development, in a way, throughout the middle ages, culminating in the Reformation in Europe. The priests were the magical manipulators, and what did they manipulate? The mass; the sacraments, which were indispensable to salvation. And what did they start doing in the end? Selling them, though indulgences. It was that which provoked Luther's protest. The priests ceased even to pretend to practise Christianity, but by virtue of their ordination, which was a magical ceremony, they had this magical power of celebrating this magical mystery called the mass, participation in which was essential to the salvation of ordinary people.

[105]

: Do you think that perhaps Christ had an unrecorded teaching for the disciples, and perhaps he made a fine distinction between ...

S: I think that there is no need to invoke an unrecorded teaching. The recorded teaching is clear enough. He says, 'Except ye be born again'. There is nothing magical about that; it is purely spiritual, straightforward, direct. Recently I was reading Froude's Lectures on the Reformation. They were quite an eye-opener. We often forget how bad things were. Practically the whole of Europe was disgusted with the Catholic clergy. We tend to forget what was going on because the Catholic church has reformed itself since to a great degree. But what was going on was terrible. Every single thing that could be bought and sold was bought and sold. Indulgences were only the crest of the wave, as it were.

Devaraja: In The Canterbury Tales there is only one member of the clergy who comes out with any slight distinction, and that is the parson, ...

S: The poor parson, yes.

Devaraja: - whereas there are about five other people connected with the clergy who come out badly in varying degrees.

S: There are several things in that series of lectures that I didn't know before, and I have read quite a bit about the Reformation. For instance, you could buy a dispensation from anything. The Pope and the Curia at the Vatican laid down all sorts of rules and regulations for everybody, but you could be exempted from the observance of absolutely anything on payment of a sum of money. That was the system, and at the time of the Reformation the popes were advised that three-quarters of their revenue came in this way, through the papal courts and through indulgences and suchlike, and they could not financially afford to give it up. So they refused and therefore they had to suffer the breakaway of what became the Protestant world. It was really terrible.

I think that probably no religion had ever become as corrupt as that was; it was really bad. But they wouldn't do anything about it for financial reasons. Good, sincere Catholic laypeople were really disgusted by the condition of the clergy. It was just a big money-making racket, all on account of people's faith - universal faith, practically - in the mass, and in the priest's exclusive right to perform that ceremony. It was an explicit teaching of the church, and is even now, that the personal moral and spiritual character of the priest does not affect the efficacy of the ceremony. That is still part of the church's teaching: that the sacraments are efficacious even though administered by an unworthy priest. So in the end you had even popes who scoffed at Christianity, who did not believe in Christianity, but who merrily operated the whole financial ecclesiastical racket. But in the end it all collapsed. Luther was the man who first raised his voice against it. He had such an overwhelming response because so many people were already so disgusted, things were so bad. But we tend to forget this.

So there is a sort of parallel here. However bad organized Buddhism has been in the East, it has never sunk anywhere near that level. There is no comparison at all. When you read the history of other religions, you marvel at how pure Buddhism has kept itself, despite all human weakness. But even Buddhists have to be quite careful. The danger that is represented here is the use of the spiritual for worldly ends.

[106]

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi in East Park, at the storeyed palace of Migara's Mother.

Now at that time Visakha, Migara's Mother, had some business or other with Pasenadi, the rajah of Kosala. This business the rajah did not bring to a conclusion, so Visakha, Migara's Mother, came at an unseasonable hour to see the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. As she sat thus the Exalted One said to her: 'Well, Visakha, how is it that you come at an unseasonable hour?'

'Sir, I had business with Pasenadi, the Kosalan rajah, but this business the rajah did not bring to a conclusion.'

Whereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Painful is all subjection; blissful is all control; By sharing men are vexed; hard to escape are bonds."

S: Visakha, generally known as Migara's Mother, is quite a character in the Pali Scriptures. She seems to have been a very strong-minded, independent woman, and she came from a family of followers of the Buddha. When she was only sixteen, she was given in marriage to Migara, who belonged to a Jain family, and she was very displeased by the Jain ascetics and compared them unfavourably with the Buddhist bhikkhus. She eventually converted the whole of her husband's family to the Buddha's teaching. So her husband, Migara, was so delighted to have been converted from being a follower of Jina to a follower of the Buddha that he said that in future he would regard her not as his wife but as his mother, because she was a sort of mother in the Dharma to him. So she was generally known as Migara's Mother, even though she was actually his wife, and her personal name was Visakha. She came from a Seti family, a merchant family. She was very wealthy and had lots of property and

possessions of her own, and is represented here as conducting her own affairs. She comes from a prominent family, she has direct access to the king. She doesn't conduct her business through any man, she goes along and sees the king herself and tries to get things done. But the king, being the king, doesn't bring it to a conclusion, so she has to go away without having finished her business. So she goes to see the Buddha. And the Buddha says, 'Well, Visakha, how is it that you come at an unseasonable hour?' and then she explains that she had business with the king but he has not brought it to a conclusion. So what does the Buddha say? 'Painful is all subjection' - it is very painful when you have to be dependent on others. The king is the king and she is only a subject. Though she is wealthy and influential, she is in subjection to him; she can't get her business finished. She has to wait for his whim, or wait at his convenience at least. That is painful. 'Blissful is all control'. For the king it is all right. He is in the position of controlling, but very few can be in that position. That is blissful. Even sharing is not easy: 'By sharing men are vexed'; even then disputes arise. 'Hard to escape are bonds.' Either you are in subjection, or you are in control, or you are sharing. If you are in subjection, it is painful. If you are controlling, [107] it is blissful - for a time. Even if you are sharing, there is trouble. So it is very difficult to escape from pain. That is the Buddha's comment on it all.

: The all 'sit down at one side'. Is there any particular reason?

S: This is polite - not to sit down in front, but to sit at one side. To sit directly facing someone, especially a superior or teacher, according to ancient Indian convention, was very impolite. To confront, as it were, was impolite. You sat down to one side. And when you left, you kept the person on your right; hence the pradaksina, which means going round on the right, keeping the sacred object or person on your right - the right being the auspicious side, the clean side, and the left the inauspicious, the unclean, according to Indian belief.

: Presumably that is why, in image halls of the Buddha, the monks used to sit not directly facing the image but sort of (sideways).

S: Right, yes. It continues that tradition. In Tibetan temples, they always remain ...

(interrupting): With the robe covering that side, what is the relevance of that? With that side covered and this side uncovered?

S: You uncover the right.

: But with the left side covered.

S: I think, originally, this was of secular origin: that you kept your right arm free. I think it was simply that.

Incidentally, I read somewhere not long ago something about the origin of the handshake. You always shake hands with the right hand. Why is that?

: That's the hand you grasp your sword with, so ...

S: Well, no, that's the later explanation. That is supposed - so I was reading - not to be the real one but a later rationalization. What I read was that this was originally the Manichean

salutation: it is grasping the right with the right, and it lingered on in the West even after the suppression of Manicheism. But it was the regular salutation between Manichees and it was they who introduced it and made it popular first.

: Who were the Manichees?

S: Oh, that is quite a long story. The Manichees were the followers of a teacher or prophet called Mani, who lived in the third century and was born in Persia, and who spread his teaching very widely. In some respects it was very similar to Buddhism; it was somewhat ascetic, and there was a spiritual community of men and women alike. But he was persecuted by the Christians, persecuted by the Muslims, persecuted by the Zoroastrians, persecuted by the Confucianists. His religion, his teaching, spread very widely but was eventually stamped out. It survived in Europe even into medieval times in various forms: the Cathars of France, for [108] instance - of Provence - were of Manichean origin. And the Bogomils and Waldenses, perhaps. There were even a few Manichees in England. They burned some at York, I think in the reign of one of the Edwards; but certainly Manichees were burned at York in the middle ages. Every organized religion seemed to be against Manicheism, from the Atlantic to the Pacific practically. They spread very widely in quite a short time; they had a very high standard of morality and spiritual life and were therefore very unpopular with the Catholic clergy. 'Cathars' meant 'the pure'; that was the name given to their highest class, who led a particularly strict life, rather like bhikkhus in the East. They were always being compared very favourably with the Catholic clergy, who did not lead that sort of life. A special crusade was unleashed by one of the popes to stamp out the Cathars in southern France. St. Bernard and St. Dominic tried to stamp them out by argument, but could not succeed, so the pope preached a crusade against them and they were all wiped out, tens of thousands of them.

: Were they persecuted when they came into contact with Buddhism at all?

S: No, they seem not to have had much contact with Buddhism except in central Asia. There is a possibility that some of the forms of Buddhism which percolated into Tibet from central Asia, before the time of Atisa, were to some extent influenced by Manicheism. It is said by some scholars, though this has never been thoroughly investigated, that the Mandala of the Five Buddhas is perhaps of Manichean origin, because the Manichees had a very important teaching about the Five Fathers of Light, or the Five Light Gods or Lightbearers. They were sometimes considered as being arranged in a sort of mandala.

Devaraja: In the Survey you talk about mandalas in the Hinayana.

S: Do I? I don't remember.

Devaraja: Yes, you do. I'll try and find it.

S: Anyway, how did we get on to that? Is there anything further about that little episode? It is a quite representative, almost characteristic episode. The Pali Scriptures are quite interesting in this respect; they represent the Buddha, his life, his teaching and his community in juxtaposition with the ordinary, everyday life of India.

Sona: It seems to be showing ... all situations.

S: Yes. And there was the Buddha, sitting in East Park - apparently in a building which had been donated by this good lady, not far from the park donated by Anathapindika, so she knew he was staying there. She just came to see him after failing to bring her business with the king to a successful conclusion.

[109]

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Anupiya in the Mango Grove. Now at that time the venerable Bhaddiya, son of the Kaligodhas, was wont to resort to forest-dwelling, to the roots of trees, to lonely spots, and often gave utterance to this verse of uplift: 'Ah! 'tis bliss! Ah! 'tis bliss!'"

S: Here, for the first time, a disciple is represented as giving vent to an udana. The translation 'verse of uplift' is quite inappropriate, because it is not even a verse, it is an exclamation.

"Now a great number of monks heard the oft repeated verse of uplift of the venerable Bhaddiya who was wont to resort to forest-dwelling... On hearing it the thought occurred to them: Doubtless, my good sir, the venerable Bhaddiya, son of the Kaligodhas, lives the Brahma-life in discontent, seeing that aforesaid he enjoyed the bliss of royalty when he lived the household life. When he thinks of that, being wont to resort to forest-dwelling, to the root of trees, to lonely spots, he gives utterance to this verse of uplift: 'Ah! 'tis bliss! Ah! 'tis bliss!' So that great number of monks went to the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. As they sat thus they (repeated their conclusions to the Exalted One).

Then the Exalted One called to a certain monk: 'Come hither, monk! In my name summon Bhaddiya, the monk, saying, "Good sir, the Exalted One calls for you."' 'Very well, sir,' replied that monk to the Exalted One and went to where the venerable Bhaddiya was, and on coming to him said this to him: 'Good sir, the Exalted One calls for you.' 'Very well, good sir,' said the venerable Bhaddiya in reply to that monk, and went to the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted the Exalted One and sat down at one side.

As he sat thus the Exalted One said to him: 'Is it true, Bhaddiya, as they say, that you, being wont to resort to forest-dwelling ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift: "Ah! 'tis bliss! Ah! 'tis bliss?'"

'It is true, sir.'

'But, Bhaddiya, what motive had you, who are wont to resort to forest-dwelling ... in thus exclaiming?'

'Formerly, sir, when I enjoyed the bliss of royalty as a householder, within my palace guards were set and outside my palace guards were set. So also in the district and outside. Thus, sir, though guarded and protected, I dwelt fearful, anxious, trembling and afraid. But now, sir, as I resort to forest-dwelling, to the root of trees, to lonely spots, though alone, I am fearless, assured, confident and unafraid. I live at ease, unstartled, lightsome, with heart like that of some wild [110] creature. This sir, was the motive I had for exclaiming "Ah! 'tis bliss! Ah! 'tis bliss!'"

Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of

uplift:

In whom there are not any inward angry thoughts, Who hath gone past becoming thus-and-thus or not, Him fear-free, blissful, sorrowless, E'en devas cannot win to see."

S: Do you get the point of this episode? (Silence.) It is how easy it is to misunderstand people. The monks overheard Bhaddiya saying 'Ah! 'tis bliss! Ah! 'tis bliss!', and what did they think? They thought, 'Ah, formerly he was living at home as a king, a member of a royal family. He is regretting it. He is saying to himself, "How blissful it was when I was living at home enjoying myself as a member of a royal family." That is why he says "Ah! 'tis bliss! Ah! 'tis bliss!" He is thinking about the past. He doesn't like being a monk.' So they went and told the Buddha. But the Buddha likes to investigate personally. He calls Bhaddiya and asks him what is his reason for saying 'Ah! 'tis bliss!' It turns out to be just the opposite. Far from regretting that he has left home and is no longer a member of a royal family, he is delighted when he thinks how anxious and trouble-ridden he used to be, and how he is now living in the forest and free from all that, and he is very happy. But the other monks had completely misunderstood.

It suggests that it is very difficult to understand another person and very easy to misunderstand and draw the wrong conclusions. Therefore the Buddha says:

'In whom there are not any inward angry thoughts, Who hath gone past becoming thus-and-thus or not, Him fear-free, blissful, sorrowless, E'en devas cannot win to see.'

Even the gods cannot see the true nature of such a person, not to speak of ordinary human beings. Even the gods, with their supernormal vision, cannot see what he is really like. So unenlightened human beings, who do not have even that supernormal vision that the devas have, can't see another person's mind; they don't know what the real situation is. In the same way, the monks could not understand what was the real state of Bhaddiya's mind. They could not understand the real meaning of his udana. They thought he was sighing for the past, when he was in fact delighted to have got rid of it; they completely misunderstood.

The whole episode is a sort of warning about drawing rash conclusions about other people from your misunderstanding of their external behaviour or of what they say. It is not that the monks had any evil intention, apparently; they just misunderstood, they had no real perception of what was going on.

: Why do you think they repeated what they thought to the Buddha?

S: Perhaps they were genuinely concerned that Bhaddiya might be backsliding and the Buddha might want to do something about it - that he was [111] in fact regretting having become a monk and was thinking about the pleasures of the past and what a good time he had had at home as a member of a royal family. There is no suggestion that they were just tale-bearing. Perhaps they were genuinely concerned. But, even so, it was based on a misunderstanding. They didn't know his real mind. They didn't know what the udana really meant.

Sagaramati: It sounds also as if, beforehand, he doesn't want to resort to forest-dwelling, even though ... Maybe he didn't really want to be a monk.

S: Where's that?

Sagaramati: In the first paragraph.

S: 'Was wont to resort'? No, it means 'was accustomed to resort'. It is just Woodward's archaic English. 'Was wont to resort' - was in the habit of resorting; it was his regular practice.

Sagaramati: Ah, I thought it meant he didn't want to!

S: No, no. You can also understand from this that kings and members of royal families led an anxious life. You get this elsewhere in the Canon, where Ajatasattu is taken by Jivaka to see the Buddha at dead of night. He is very afraid that Jivaka may be leading him into a trap and delivering him into his enemies' hands. Though Jivaka has said that 2,500 monks were living there in the forest with the Buddha, he can't hear a sound, so he suspects it may be an ambush and he is very apprehensive. He keeps asking Jivaka, 'Are you sure you're not leading me into a trap?!'

: There seems to be a tremendous amount of that. Didn't he imprison his own father?

S: Ajatasattu, yes.

: Was that sort of thing quite common in India at that time?

S: Well, it has been fairly common, I think, in all royal families! Read what the Turkish sultans did to their relations. Members of the royal family were regularly kept in cages until they ascended the throne. There were well-known cases of Turkish sultans, before ascending the throne, having been kept in cages for up to 30 years. They went straight from the cage to the throne. (Murmurs of astonishment.) Of course, the janissaries held the real power.

Just recollect what the last empress of China did, first with her husband, then with her son, and then with her grandson. She put them out of the way as soon as they became a bit inconvenient.

There is this famous story in the sayings of Confucius. Confucius, in the course of his wanderings, met a man living in a certain land, and Confucius came to learn that there were plenty of fierce tigers in that land. So he said to the man, 'How is it that you live in this land, even though it is infested with fierce tigers?' He replies, 'Yes, it is true it is infested with fierce tigers, but the king is quite good.' That suggests that elsewhere, in other states, the kings were worse even than the tigers.

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There is a quite interesting thing about the India of the Buddha's day: the republics were being ousted by the monarchies, and some scholars, looking at the Buddha's life from a purely humanistic point of view, are of the opinion that one reason why he created a Sangha was to try to preserve, at least to a limited extent, some of the freedom and, as it were, democracy that he was accustomed to in the kshatriya community - on, as it were, a higher level. The Buddha was not at all in favour of arbitrary rule or authority. Certainly, the whole tradition of the Sangha suggests that. He didn't appoint a successor. The Sangha would look after its own affairs.

What about the verse?

'In whom there are not any inward angry thoughts'.

The Buddha is describing, in a way, the ideal man again and, by implication, Bhaddiya, who had 'gone past becoming thus-and-thus or not' - in other words, gone beyond any form of conditioned existence within the Wheel of Life.

'Him fear-free, blissful, sorrowless, E'en devas cannot win to see.'

Even the gods can't see his true nature; he is beyond their vision.

ABC: What does it mean, 'any inward angry thoughts'? Has that any relationship to the prose section?

S: Apparently not, as far as I can see. Perhaps it just suggests that it is quite important to get rid of the 'inward angry thoughts'; that is why they are specifically mentioned in this very short verse. Perhaps - this is just speculation - some of those monks had inward angry thoughts about Bhaddiya, thinking he was a very bad monk, regretting having left the worldly life. But that is speculation; we don't really know; it isn't really clear.

Do you notice the Buddha says 'fear-free'? Bhaddiya is represented as saying that he resorts 'to forest-dwelling, to the root of trees, to lonely spots, though alone, I am fearless, assured, confident and unafraid. I live at ease, unstartled, lightsome, with heart like that of some wild creature.' Great importance, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is attached in early Buddhism, in the Buddha's teaching, to being free from fear and anxiety.

Before we close let me just read through the verses again, the udanas themselves, and see what sort of general impression we get from them.

(Reads through all verses in Chapter II.)

Is there any general impression from this set of verses?

ABC: This is more on conditionality and teaching and the Dharma, whereas the first chapter was just description.

S: The verses of the first chapter (mainly give a) general description of the spiritual idea. Here (the description is mainly of) what you've got to get rid of, or what you've got to cultivate, to realize that ideal.

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Subhuti: Happiness and unhappiness seem to be very important (in this chapter)...

Sona: The first section seems to be the most important, and all the others just strengthen it.

S: You mean the first chapter, or the first section of this chapter?

Sona: No, the first section of the second chapter. I was wondering why the chapter was called

Mucalinda.

S: After the opening episode. Maybe it's just easier to remember. You get the impression, reading through this second chapter, that we are a little further on in the history of the Buddha's movement. True, it goes back to the beginning again, but then from that beginning it seems to have moved further on. It is a little more involved with the world or in contact with the world at certain points; and there is perhaps a bigger following by this time and a certain amount of opposition and jealousy. There are also several prominent and well-to-do supporters.

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Day Three

"Chapter III - Nanda

THUS have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now on that occasion a certain monk was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, enduring pain that was the fruit born of former action, pain racking, sharp and bitter; but he was mindful, composed and uncomplaining.

And the Exalted One saw that monk so seated and so employed, and, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

For the monk who hath all karma left behind
And shaken off the dust aforesaid gathered,
Who stands fast without thought of 'I' or 'mine' -
For such there is no need to talk to folk."

S: Once again, there is not a very close connection between the udana and the prose episode, but the prose episode recounts an occurrence which must have been common enough, both then and now: that is to say, the monk sitting meditating and experiencing all sorts of pains, presumably physical pains, pains in the body. The Buddha here says that it is on account of past karma, but that should not be taken to mean that all the physical aches and pains you get when you sit and try to meditate are the result of past karma. They may be; on the other hand, they may not. Unless there is a Buddha around to tell you, you can't know. But, in this instance, apparently, it was due to past karma. But whether due to past karma or not, what is important is to do as the monk did and bear the pains mindfully, composed and uncomplaining.

Sona: It says he was 'holding his body upright'. How important, in fact, is a good posture when one sits?

S: That depends on what one means by a good posture. Certainly, (you should be) upright and relaxed, without being tense or strained. But also you find that, as you become really concentrated, the posture automatically adjusts. When you get deeply concentrated, it is almost as though an energy arises within you which quite literally pulls you up. That is the way you should be. So if you are not in that deeply concentrated state, obviously you have to put yourself deliberately into that sort of position or posture, until such time as it happens naturally.

I don't know that this happens when you are merely sitting on a chair. I rather doubt it. No doubt you can be quite relaxed, comfortable and upright on a chair, but I can't say whether one experiences that - being pulled upright when deeply concentrated - when sitting on a chair. I don't know whether anyone has any experience of this?

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: I used to find, sitting on a chair, that when I was really concentrated my back became straight.

S: Well, it's the same thing, then. But there is certainly no virtue or merit in maintaining a certain difficult posture, which is so painful that you can't even begin to meditate. Some of the Zen people seem to insist that this is very necessary and good, and (that thereby one is) somehow expiating something, but I think one should beware of making that too much of a general statement. Maybe there are occasions when you should just bear the pain and carry on as best you can, but you should certainly not make that into a general rule, or think that the more it hurts the better it's doing you. That sounds much more like a Christian attitude than a really Buddhist one. You find absolutely nothing of that in the Pali Canon, except little episodes of this sort. It is certainly not suggested that it is better if it hurts, as it were. If it does hurt, that is just unfortunate. If it doesn't hurt, so much the better.

I think that people in the West who take up Buddhism, and especially Zen, with perhaps some lingering feelings of guilt, do tend to feel that if it's hurting it must be doing you good. Also you like to feel that your pain isn't being wasted - that you are not suffering to no purpose.

I remember, a propos Zen sitting, Anne Parkes telling me that she had been to some Zen centres in the States and was quite appalled at the way they were sitting and the way they were made to sit. According to her, it definitely damaged the spine. She said that some of the people who had been into Zen for quite a few years had permanently damaged themselves. She was quite horrified about it. They were forcing themselves to sit in unnatural postures. I don't know whether that is general to Japanese Zen or whether it was just those centres and those particular teachers - or whether there was perhaps some misunderstanding. But she was quite upset by it.

Subhuti: I have noticed a tendency with people who practise Zen - I notice with Bert Taylor of the Buddhist Society, that he talks of meditation as 'sitting'. It seems that the actual posture is more important than the state of mind. When he says that somebody is 'sitting well', what he means is that they are in a good position.

S: Yes, an approved position. It is almost like in the army, where you are made to stand to attention in a certain way: pull your stomach in, stick your chest out and your shoulders back, elbows in and all that kind of thing. That is the approved posture.

:It seems to be very much tied up with the Japanese character - all sort of military.

S: Right. You get no reference in the Pali Canon to how you should sit. It merely says - and even this is not an injunction, only a description - that he is 'holding his body upright'. That is all that is said, as far as I recollect, in the Pali Canon. There is never anything more than that. The monk is just sitting cross-legged and holding himself upright. The Indians seem not to pay nearly as much attention to these things, or to emphasize them nearly so much, as the

Japanese Zen people do.

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Devaraja: It is interesting looking at pictures of various ... with meditation bands. By Zen standards, it is a very undisciplined posture, but it is sufficient to hold themselves upright.

S: They look quite relaxed, so the postures are quite graceful, whereas in the case of the Zen people sometimes, they are rather stiff and grim. I think it is not unconnected with this whole idea of getting there by force - that what you have to do is get hold of a method or a technique and operate it with all the force of your will, and you will then get there.

This episode makes it clear that whatever discomfort, even pain, arises when you are sitting, if it is unavoidable, it is just to be accepted. One just carries on mindfully and doesn't complain.

The link, such as it is, between the udana and the prose episode is in the first line:

'For the monk who hath all karma left behind' ...

because the prose episode refers to the monk as 'enduring pain that was the fruit born of former action', former karma, but the verse suggests that he has left all karma behind. In other words, he is not making any fresh karma. He is bearing the results of past karma, but he is not reacting. He is 'mindful, composed and uncomplaining'. Because he is not reacting, he is not creating any fresh karma; he is merely bearing the old. So, in that sense, he has left all karma far behind. He is not generating any new karma.

'And shaken off the dust aforetime gathered.'

The word for 'dust' is probably rajas, which means both 'dust' and 'passion'; sometimes translated into English as 'the dust of passion' because it suggests both.

'Who stands fast without thought of "I" or "mine"' ...

stands fast in Nirvana, the commentary says ...

'For such there is no need to talk to folk.'

So the emphasis is on 'no need' - not that he doesn't talk, but there is no need so far as he personally is concerned. If he does talk to others, it is for their benefit, to help them; as when, say, he teaches the Dharma.

The whole episode also suggests something of general significance that is, that even when you have at last got yourself on the right path, you may still have to experience the consequences of things you did when you were on the wrong path. The fact that you are now on the right path does not mean that you are exempt from the consequences of the things you did before you got on to that path. But you just have to accept, and bear, and be mindful. As it has been said, your sins do catch up with you, even though in the meantime you have repented.

Sometimes you can find yourself in the ironical position that, on account of things you have done in the past, you have, if not to suffer, at least to be involved with certain consequences which are completely inconsistent with your present state of mind; but you can't help it, because those consequences have sprung out of things that you did or [117] entered into in the past. So sometimes you feel in a quite anomalous situation; you're in the past, in a sense, and in the present at the same time. You're in the past in the sense of having to deal with the consequences of the past, even though you are no longer in any way in sympathy with the interests or activities or mental states which have given rise to those consequences in the present. Something like that was the position with regard to this particular monk, who is having to experience 'racking, sharp and bitter' pains as a consequence of something he had done in the past, even though in the present he is simply trying to get on with his meditation. But he simply has to accept those consequences and be mindful about them - remain composed and uncomplaining and just get on with his meditation. It suggests also how careful we have to be of getting into any situation the consequences of which are likely to last for a long time, because they may outlast our real involvement in the original situation.

: Having an affair is a good example. (Laughter.)

S: It really is! Many a young man has entered into a situation which he regards as a pleasant, short-term affair which has stretched to a sentence of twenty years, as it were. That is quite a good example. But you have to shoulder it, because that is the responsibility you have entered upon, and the time for thinking is past; you should have thought before. You must just bear the consequences and carry on 'mindful, composed and uncomplaining'.

: That is where one really has to develop ksanti.

S: Right. It is patience in respect of the consequences of one's own past action. It is no use fretting or getting upset. You have committed those actions and you are now bearing the consequences, so there is no point in making the situation worse still by rebelling in a subjective fashion or by getting depressed or annoyed or resentful. No, just quietly and cheerfully accept: 'Yes, this is the consequence of my own action. OK, I shall bear the responsibility, and within this situation I shall now do the very best that I can' - just as the monk was doing. Or at least not create any fresh karma.

Is there any query on all this? (Silence.) One could even say that it is very rarely indeed that one can ever make a completely fresh start. If ever one can, one is very lucky. Almost always, one is having to carry something of the past along with one in the form of consequences of actions committed in the past. So if ever you are in the position of having a completely clean slate, able to write on it anything that you like - if you have no obligation, no debt, no responsibility coming from the past you are very lucky.

In this connection, one could even bring in the fact, according to the Vinaya - that is, the later, more elaborate, coenobitical, monastic Vinaya that developed after the Buddha's death, or perhaps even towards the end of his life - that one of the conditions to be fulfilled before someone can be ordained as a bhikkhu is that he should be free from debt. Otherwise the past pursues him. Supposing he is in the midst of his meditations and his creditors come up, wanting their money; what is he to do? So he has to be free from debt at the time of his ordination. You can look at this in a very narrow sense or in a broader sense. But, as [118] far as possible, he should not have any responsibilities which would continue after his ordination

and trouble him in his new life; in other words, his new life should be a new life, untroubled by anything from the past except, of course, what he bears within himself. But it isn't easy to make a fresh start.

Has anybody ever thought about this or experienced it, where they felt that they were in the position of making a complete break, a completely fresh start as regards external things, responsibilities and involvements?

Sona: I have on one level once, when I'd finished working in an office. It was just a small part of my life. I felt that I was free from all that. But, in fact, the whole of my past life working in an office sort of came overwhelmingly into the present situation, and I was caught up in it all again...

S: Let us go on to section ii, where we get a quite well-known example of someone who was caught up in the past and allowed the past to run over into the present.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Nanda, brother to the Exalted One, the son of the Exalted One's aunt, thus addressed a great number of monks: 'Good sirs, without zest I follow the Brahma-life. I cannot endure the Brahma-life. Giving up the training, I will go back to the low.'

Then a certain monk went to the Exalted One ... as he sat at one side that monk repeated the words of the venerable Nanda.

Then the Exalted One called to a certain monk, saying: 'Come thou, monk! In my name summon the monk Nanda, saying: "Nanda, good sir, the Teacher summons you."'

'Yes, sir,' replied that monk to the Exalted One, and went (and gave Nanda the message of the Exalted One). 'Very well, good sir,' said the venerable Nanda, and went to the Exalted-One... As he sat at one side the Exalted One said to him: 'Is it true, as they say, Nanda, that you addressed a great number of monks, saying: "Good sirs, without zest I follow the Brahma-life, and so forth"?''

'It is true, sir.'

'But how is it, Nanda, that you have no zest for the Brahma-life, that you cannot endure it, that you will give up the training and return to the low?'

'Sir, when I left my home, a Sakyan girl, the fairest in the land, with hair half combed, looked back at me and said this, "May you soon be back again, young master." Sir, as I am always thinking of that, I have no zest for the Brahma-life, I cannot endure the Brahma life, I will give up the training and return to the low.'

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Then the Exalted One, taking the venerable Nanda by the arm, just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend it when stretched out, even so did the Exalted One vanish

from Jeta Grove and appear among the devas of the Thirty-Three.

Now at that time as many as five hundred nymphs were come to minister to Sakka, lord of the devas, and they were called 'dove-footed.' Then the Exalted One said to the venerable Nanda, 'Nanda, do you see those five hundred nymphs called "dove-footed"?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Now what think you, Nanda? Which are the more lovely, more worth looking at, more charming, the Sakyan girl, the loveliest in the land, or these five hundred nymphs called "dove-footed"?'

'O, sir, just as if she were a mutilated monkey with ears and nose cut off, even so, sir, the Sakyan girl, the loveliest in the land if set beside these five hundred nymphs called "dove-footed", is not worth a fraction of them, she cannot be compared with them. Why, these five hundred nymphs are far more lovely, far more worth looking at, far more charming!'

Thereupon the Exalted One, taking the venerable Nanda by the arm, just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm, or bend it when stretched out, even so did he vanish from the devas of the Thirty-Three and reappear in Jeta Grove.

And the monks heard the rumour: They say that the venerable Nanda, brother of the Exalted One, the son of the Exalted One's aunt, leads the Brahma-life for the sake of nymphs. They say the Exalted One has assured him of getting five hundred nymphs called 'dove footed.'

Thereafter the monks who were comrades of the venerable Nanda called him by the name of 'hireling' and 'menial', saying: 'A hireling surely is the venerable Nanda. A menial surely is the venerable Nanda. He leads the Brahma-life for the sake of nymphs. 'Tis said the Exalted One is surety to the venerable Nanda for getting five hundred nymphs called "dove-footed."'

Now the venerable Nanda being thus worried, humiliated and despised since he was called 'hireling' and 'menial' by his comrades, living alone, remote, energetic, ardent, making the self strong, in no long time attained in this very world, himself realizing it by full comprehension, that for which the clansman rightly goes forth from home to the homeless, even that unsurpassed goal of the Brahma-life, and so abode (realizing): Ended is birth, lived is the life, done is what was to be done; there is no more of being here. Thus the venerable Nanda was one of the arhants.

Now a certain devata, as night was waning, lighting up the whole Jeta Grove with surpassing radiance, came to see the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and stood at one side. So standing that devata said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, the venerable Nanda, [120] the Exalted One's brother and son of his aunt, by ending of the cankers has in this very world, himself realizing it by full comprehension, won the heart's release, the release by insight, which is canker-free, and so abides.'

Then in the Exalted One also arose that knowledge (that it was so). Then at the end of that night the venerable Nanda came to the Exalted One ... and said this: Sir, as to the Exalted One's standing surety for me for the getting five hundred nymphs called "dove-footed", I

release the Exalted One, sir, from that promise.

I also, Nanda, grasping your thought with my own have seen (that it is so). However, a devata informed me of the matter, saying, "Sir, the venerable Nanda by ending of the cankers ... has won the heart's release .. and so abides. "But since, Nanda, by not grasping your heart is released from the cankers, I too am released from my promise.'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Who hath o'erpassed the slough, crushed down the thorn Of lust, and come to reach illusion's end, That monk by pain-and-pleasure is not stirred."

S: Well, leaving aside the slightly mythological context, what do you think the general significance or meaning of the episode is? What does it really say?

ABC: He seems to have refined a coarse energy to a point where it's just gone beyond.

S: Yes, right.

What about the heaven of the thirty-three? What do you think that represents? What do you think that is? Do you know where it is located, according to traditional cosmology? - it is still within the kama-loka.

: Isn't it the lowest of the heavens?

S: It is the lowest of the heavens, yes, within the kama-loka still. It is not yet even into the rupa-loka, the world of pure form. But certainly it is higher than this human world. Sometimes they refer to it as a sort of lower archetypal world. But you could also regard it as the world of the arts - I think this is quite important - the world of aesthetic delight. You could even call it the world of imagination, in the higher, slightly more spiritual, sense.

: You couldn't take me there, could you? (Laughs.)

S: I thought you were there! Where have you been spending your time, then?

: It'll do. It's high enough for me!

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S: Well, if you really think you could handle five hundred nymphs!

: I'm sure I could! (Laughter.)

S: With pink feet and all, huh? Why do you think they're called pink-footed or dove-footed? 'Dove-footed' means pink-footed, because doves have pink feet, but why pink-footed?

: They don't do any walking or any work. (Just sit) around.

S: No. I'm afraid that's frightfully prosaic. No, in India, the women paint their feet with red dye, don't they? - with lac. They stain the soles and the upper part of their feet red, so that

they look like doves, pink-footed, dove-footed.

One can take the Heaven of the Thirty-three - the Thirty-three being the thirty-three gods of Vedic tradition, which are regarded by Buddhism as inhabiting the lowest of the heavenly worlds - as referring to meditative experience which goes somewhat beyond the ordinary sense level, but is still not into the dhyanas proper. It is perhaps the realm of (Vain?), where one experiences all sorts of bright and beautiful visions which can be quite entrancing, but which still falls short of the first dhyana. Beginners often experience these sort of things. Shortly after you take up meditation, you may well have a number of visionary experiences which are quite pleasant. Nanda's experience very likely referred to that kind of thing. It could be that he was with the Buddha and, due to the Buddha's proximity - perhaps to a very powerful aura emanating from the Buddha - Nanda had these experiences. Maybe he got on a bit better with his meditation for a while. He had a number of visionary experiences; at least he saw that there is something in the spiritual life after all. You can very well look at it in that way.

This is because every heaven is correlated with a corresponding mental state, a corresponding state of consciousness. The rupa-lokas are correlated with the rupa-dhyanas, the arupa-loka with the arupa-dhyanas. In the same way, this sort of plane or state, intermediate between ordinary human consciousness and the first of the dhyanas, is correlated with a state of consciousness which is intermediate. It is the subtle physical, as distinct from the plane of pure form. It is visionary rather than strictly archetypal. So Nanda's libido was as it were displaced from the gross kama-loka to the subtle kama-loka, preparatory to being sublimated into the rupa-loka and arupa-loka.

This is a very pertinent episode inasmuch as it reflects a general spiritual, or psychological-cum-spiritual, situation or even problem.

: When you say 'visionary', do you mean that the visions in themselves have no particular significance?

S: No, (they don't).

: - whereas the archetypal, though it has a visionary quality, has a deeper inner spiritual significance?

S: One could say that, though it's still a matter only of degree, inasmuch as the rupa-loka and the arupa-loka are still mundane. But the situation changes a little with the Mahayana and Vajrayana, inasmuch as the visionary and the archetypal, especially perhaps the archetypal, are given [122] a sort of symbolical significance. In the Pali Canon, everything of this sort is in terms of current Indian - that is, Hindu - mythology. It is as it were raw; it is not imbued with any spiritual significance. But in the case of the Mahayana, and even more so the Vajrayana, you may have what are in a sense the same sort of visionary and archetypal experiences, but they bear a spiritual or transcendental significance. In other words, in the Pali context, if you have a visionary experience you see as it were one of the gods of Indian tradition or mythology, which are purely natural, though on a higher level. But when you do a visualization exercise and you see, say, a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, though you are seeing the same sort of thing and it is on the same kind of level - it is a form, a shape, it has certain colours, it radiates light and so on - it has a symbolical significance, too. It is imbued with a

symbolical significance. It is a figure or form of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, with all that that suggests. So there is a difference. But here you get it, as it were, in its purely natural form. You see the difference? And this represents a very important development in the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. The archetypal is sort of fused with the Transcendental.

: Harnessed to it.

S: Yes.

Devaraja: Can you say anything on how that connection is made?

ABC: Is it a matter of attitudes and suggestion?

S: It is partly the attitude, but the attitude depends upon the form that you see. You could say that, in purely psychological terms, when you visualize a Buddha or Bodhisattva it's just the same as if you visualized a tree or a geometrical figure. But, since it is a figure of the Buddha or Bodhisattva, there are all sorts of associations. It suggests Enlightenment, it encourages devotional feelings, and so on. In this way, it has a transcendental significance. I use the word 'Transcendental' to avoid using the word 'spiritual', which I confine to the lower levels.

Devaraja: So the connection is quite deliberate and conscious?

S: Yes. So, from a purely concentration point of view, it doesn't really matter whether you visualize a Vedic deity - Indra and so on - or a Buddha or Bodhisattva, or a square or a circle or any other shape. They are all equally able to help you concentrate. But if it is a Buddha or Bodhisattva figure, all sorts of associations come into play, all sorts of suggestions, even reflections. It has that symbolic value. It is saturated with that symbolic value. Therefore, it becomes a means of direct experience of the Transcendental, and the spiritual and the Transcendental are fused here. But that development could only take place later, when Buddhist art had arisen.

Sagaramati: What about things like Jung's archetypes? Do they have any higher, Transcendental significance?

S: I don't feel that they do. I mean that here one can't look at it scientifically or rationally; it's very much a matter of feeling. They ought to have (a higher significance), because Jung, for instance, equates [123] some of his archetypes with quite Transcendental Buddhist symbols, but I don't feel that they are the same thing. When reading through Jung I get a quite different sort of feeling. It seems much heavier and grosser. I'd associate his archetypes much more with the level (in this episode), the world of the thirty-three gods, as it were; not with the higher, more spiritual planes. But I say this on the basis of my personal feeling or impression, not as a rational conclusion. I think that probably a rational conclusion would be out of place.

Sagaramati: In the Padmasambhava lecture you talk about the indigenous British gods. Would they be, as it were, equivalent to these natural archetypes?

S: To some extent. They also represent natural forces and energies, perhaps not even on this level in some cases. It is very difficult to know what one is in contact with in the case of the ancient British gods and so on, because the living tradition has been lost. You can't go into a

temple of any of these gods and get any sort of feeling. All you've got are some images that have been dug up, very fragmented and mutilated, and one doesn't know anybody who worships these gods. So what they actually stood for or meant in the consciousness of the people who worshipped them is all very hypothetical and speculative.

: When I went to Samye Ling, I was told that Trungpa once went and meditated in a stone circle with the purpose of getting the protection of the local deities. I think he had some sort of contact with those forces there.

S: We don't really know even whether the stone circles were connected with deities. They might have been, they might not; we don't know. In some cases it isn't so personalised that one can speak in terms of a definite deity; it is more like a force or energy, like you get at, say, Glastonbury. There is no question of any particular god, so far as they know, but there is a sort of energy or force there, which is comparatively gross and crude.

Devaraja: Can you say more about that, as it relates to your own experience of it?

S: (pause) It is more a question of a pyramid of energies; the gross forms are at the bottom and the higher you get they gradually are refined, until you reach the peak or pinnacle, the topmost point where they are very refined indeed.

If you go through the Pali texts which deal with the early Buddhist cosmological tradition, you get a description of these ascending heavens, as we have to call them, or worlds, or realms, which are the objective correlate of the corresponding subjective state of consciousness. So you get the kama-loka, the world of sensuous desire in which we normally live. Then you get the rupa-loka, the world of pure form, the archetypal plane as I sometimes call it; and then the formless world. There are descriptions of the various subplanes and the different gods inhabiting them, and the descriptions are usually in terms of pure light of various kinds, different kinds of radiance which become more and more refined the higher up you get. On the lower levels, on our level, everything is gross and opaque and heavy and dark. When you get up to the more [124] refined levels of that, it becomes rather brilliant and shiny and brightly coloured and vivid. This is the visionary plane. Then the colours become more and more delicate and refined and more complex, and maybe there are other colours, as it were, that we know nothing of; this is the rupa-loka, and the forms are very beautiful. Then forms and colours fade out altogether and you only have pure light of various kinds. That is the arupa-loka, the formless plane. In the end, you don't even have light or anything that could be described as light in our sense of the term. Then, of course, you verge on Nirvana or Enlightenment. That is the general picture which is given in the Pali Canon and the Buddhist Scriptures generally.

So here, Nanda is being taken by the hand from the gross, the dark, the heavy and the opaque up to the comparatively refined, where you get brilliant colours and beautiful forms and shapes. So, naturally, he finds that more attractive, and he is weaned away from those lower, darker, heavier, more opaque levels.

: Is there any special text that enumerates these heavens in detail?

S: You get quite a bit of this in the Digha-Nikaya and also in the Abhidharma literature. It is also symbolized by the four Yugas, in a way when there was a sort of lapse from the higher to

the lower levels. You remember when I spoke about Arunachala, I said that according to local traditions Arunachala was originally a mountain of light, then it became a mountain of rubies, then a mountain of gold, and then a mountain of stones. So it appears as a mountain of stones, as it were on the kama-loka level. You get to the more refined reaches of the kama-loka, that is to say the heaven of the thirty-three gods, and it is like a mountain of gold. You go up into the archetypal plane and it is like a mountain of rubies, and you go up into the formless plane and it is then like a mountain of light. It is the same sort of progression. It is the same with the three kayas: you see the Buddha on the kama-loka plane and he looks like an ordinary human being, an ordinary man six feet tall, with arms and legs and ears and nose and so on; that is the human, historical Buddha. But you see him on the archetypal plane in his Buddhistic version, of course, imbued with all the significance of Buddhist symbolism; that is the sambhogakaya, which is depicted in the thangkas and so on. Then, on the formless plane or, better still, the transcendental plane, that is the dharmakaya, which has, as it were, no form at all. You get the same sort of progression again.

: Did you say there were four planes there? You were comparing the four Yugas to four planes. What are they? The kayas...

S: Well, this is my own correlation, I must say. It is only quite approximate. One takes the general spirit of it, but this correlation is not actually given, so far as I know, in any Buddhist text. The mountain of stones - stones being gross, opaque, dark and heavy - corresponds to the kama-loka type of perception. Those are the lower reaches of the kama-loka, the human plane. Then there is the mountain of gold, corresponding to the higher reaches of the kama-loka in the Indra's heaven type of perception. Then the mountain of rubies, or the mountain as a mountain or heap of rubies, corresponding to the rupa-loka or archetypal plane; and then the mountain of light corresponding to the formless plane. Nirvana [125] is still beyond, and we leave Nirvana out of the comparison. That is the sort of empty space when you launch yourself from the top of the mountain of light: the Void.

But do you get this idea of progression - the ascent up through the planes? So Nanda, by the sheer impact of the Buddha's personality, was transformed or transferred or translated from the lower to the higher reaches of the kama-loka, and that was enough to encourage him. Also there is the fact that he was mocked and humiliated by the other monks. That is rather interesting. What do you think is the general significance or value of that? He was jeered at by the other monks and made to feel very ashamed of himself for his low aspirations, his mercenary attitude to the spiritual life. (Someone chuckles.)

ABC: They progress better. It's like those pictures of beings in the hell world. So if you're being put through a really rough time, like convicts, you're liable to get on with the job.

S: Yes. But it was a particular kind of rough time, wasn't it? It says they mocked at him.

ABC: It doesn't say much for the monks who were mocking him.

S: It doesn't really, but it seems to have had a good effect.

Devaraja: I am quite interested by the words they use, like 'menial'. That seems to be a particular choice of word, and I wonder why it is used.

S: He is engaged in his spiritual practice, as it were for wages, just like a hired servant. That is why he is called menial and hireling. He is not engaging in the spiritual life - he is not continuing with the brahmacarya - because he wants to, because he likes it, but just in order to get a certain reward in the lowest of all the heavens. So he is just like a hireling, like a menial who is working for wages, not like a son of the house who does things because it is his house, his home.

"The monks who were comrades of the venerable Nanda called him by the name of "hireling" and "menial", saying: "A hireling surely is the venerable Nanda. A menial surely is the venerable Nanda; He leads the Brahma-life for the sake of nymphs. 'Tis said that the Exalted One is surety to the venerable Nanda for getting five hundred nymphs called 'dove-footed'."

'Now the venerable Nanda being thus worried, humiliated and despised since he was called "hireling" and "menial" by his comrades' -"

This seems to have prodded him. He started being ashamed of himself and repentant. What do you think is the value of this sort of mockery and humiliation? Do you think it has any value?

ABC: It made him look more deeply into himself, become more critical.

S: Obviously it is not the sort of thing to be applied as a general technique for helping people on. You have to be quite careful, because you can make people depressed and even resentful, instead of 'remote, energetic, ardent, making the self strong'.

That is an interesting phrase, 'making the self strong' - pahitatta.

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There is no question here of annihilating the ego, we notice. It is more ordinary language, 'making the self strong'; developing self-confidence, you could say. Maybe Nanda lacked self-confidence; maybe that was why he was always thinking of the Sakyan girl, 'the fairest in the land', and hankering after her.

This is also one reason why all the arts and everything aesthetic and imaginative is so important in the spiritual life. If the spiritual life is devoid of these things, it becomes very dry and uninteresting, unappetising, and there is nothing for the emotions to latch on to, even if they do want to work themselves up to a higher level. Has anybody actually found this?

ABC: We've found it in London.

S: Which way?

ABC: The negative attitude towards the arts. It was a question whether they were becoming - they were almost regarded as a luxury.

: I find personally that just listening to a piece of music can really lift me on to a completely new level and help me to cope with things much more effectively.

ABC: They tend to help give you a clearer view, take you out of what you're into, the mire

you're into. You ... and get a clear view ...

: (They can) refine personal emotions and help to bring out sort of higher emotions.

S: But do you feel, then, the arts are being discouraged at present?

ABC: Not now. There was a stage of that.

S: You see, when I speak of art, the aesthetic and artistic, the archetypal and so on, I don't mean to suggest that everybody ought to be into the arts. Most people have no talent for that anyway. But in the Movement, in the tradition as a whole, there should be an imaginative and as it were archetypal component, such as you get, for instance, when you set up a beautiful shrine and you have a beautiful image, and you have flowers and lighted candles and things of that sort. But (I don't mean) that everybody should be trying to paint or compose, even those without talent.

Devaraja: I find that people, even when participating to a very small degree in the arts, do develop a greater awareness. I think that is true particularly in teaching people how to draw; it teaches them how to really see pictures. It's very beneficial.

Sona: Do you feel that, if you're not really sure if you've got some talent - well, if you (are sure you) haven't got any - and you feel as though you would like to take up art or drawing or whatever, to try and express yourself in some way, would it be important to go ahead and do that, or wouldn't it be particularly helpful?

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S: It would depend on how important one felt it to be. If you were restless and unhappy until you did it, maybe you ought to do it. But I think people are often influenced by their own milieu. If you mix a lot with people who are painting and drawing, you feel that maybe you ought to too, that maybe there's something wrong with you if you don't, that you ought to do it. And maybe you don't really want to, not deeply. But I think that quite a lot of people are into the arts in this very amateurish sort of way, just because it's around, or it's the thing to do - just to pass a bit of time in that way.

I certainly think that dilettantism should be discouraged. But, at the same time, very definitely, in the tradition itself, there should be something colourful and attractive, something that the emotions can latch on to and be lifted up by.

Devaraja: I am often quite astounded because I find that, moving around Archway, I sometimes go into people's rooms and see the objects and colours they surround themselves with. I am really surprised that people are so insensitive to the colours and so on, and how heavy the colours are ...

S: Well, when I came back from New Zealand and gave my slide show, you may remember that there were a large number of Order Members present, and I commented on the fact that they were all wearing black, brown, grey and dark blue and so on, and suggested that they ought to be a bit more colourful, but I noticed there was quite a strong resistance to this. Excuses were made and some people got rather strongly off the track, and so forth. Maybe Archway has something to do with it - it is just a hopeless area from the aesthetic point of

view. People just give up. Not that that is really an excuse, because one should never give up. As the Tibetans say, you can make yourself comfortable even in hell if you go the right way about it. So there is no reason why you shouldn't have an attractive room, even in Archway. I noticed this at the centre last year and I spoke about it - it was getting a bit shabby and unattractive, so something was done about it and now, of course, it is very much better.

I think on the whole - though I quite see what can be said in justification and excuse - that, from an aesthetic point of view, the whole Movement has let itself slip rather badly, in London especially. Not sufficient attention is paid to the aesthetic side of things. Maybe it's rather difficult now, until we move out of Archway, but I think that, once we are elsewhere, we should give full attention to this.

I hope I am not holding up an unrealizable ideal, but on my last visit to Brighton I was taken to see the Brighton Pavilion. It is quite interesting going round there - the furnishings and decor of the different rooms are in a way the most interesting part of it. We went into one room towards the end, and as you enter there is a definite atmosphere - an effect produced almost instantaneously - just on account of the lines, the contours, the colours and so on. I think one should bear all that sort of thing in mind. Of course, we can't hope to compete with the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, but still we should bear that sort of thing very much in mind - what will be the effect on people entering the building, entering the shrine, even entering the coffee bar or whatever we have. All this must be attended to, so that it is very pleasing, even soothing and gratifying, inspiring and stimulating ...

: Light and airy.

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S: Yes. Obviously we will be very much limited by the size and shape of the rooms and all that kind of thing, also by the limitations of our own resources, but we should certainly do the best that we can in this way. I feel this is one thing that needs very much to be attended to as regards the Movement generally. That is why I am glad to see that our publications are looking quite attractive. This is very good.

So the whole of our external aspect should look attractive, without being gaudy or tawdry. That is the other extreme. Everything should be in good taste, refined and well thought out. We don't want lots of cheap paper lanterns and paper chains, artificial flowers and things like that, which some people love. We should avoid all that.

(We should aim at) a sort of middle way between the austerity of Zen and the exuberance of Tibetan Buddhism. Many a Tibetan temple looks like a junk shop. It has been crammed with stuff over the centuries, and often there are layers and layers of dust over everything. There is no room for any more images, books, lamps or what not. The whole place is stuffed full; you can hardly move around. We certainly don't want that. There is not even room to do your prostrations, sometimes.

And (we should have) good images; I think the image is very important. It's no use just plonking an image on the altar and thinking it's an image because allegedly it represents the Buddha, when there is no refinement in the features and no spiritual feel to the whole thing - it is just labelled a Buddha image. That is no good at all. It would be better not to have an image, just to have some flowers. There are plenty of poor Buddha images available in the

East. So we should pay very close attention to all these things.

I don't know about dress. That is partly an economic thing, I suppose. I think it is a bit surprising if you look too dull or drab - you should be a little bit colourful.

Certainly, surroundings do affect people's minds. So once we do get our brand new centre - though this applies to all centres, however small - it should create a definite impression of light, peace and brightness and so on, tidiness, order, mindfulness. When a newcomer walks into the centre, he should feel, 'Ah, this place must be run by very mindful people, people with a good aesthetic sense.' Even if they do not consciously think it, the effect will often be there. So they will be transported at once from the lower reaches of the kama-loka to the higher reaches of the kama-loka, just by entering the place.

Subhuti: There won't be so much of a lift-off necessary to ascend into the rupa-loka.

5: Right, yes. So we must think very carefully about the choice of colours and about what kind of image, flower vases - all the things of that sort to have, especially as regards the shrines; (they should be) very carefully thought about.

There are a few minor points in this episode. The Brahma-life that is the brahmacarya. I said a few words about that the other day. Carya means 'course'. Sometimes it is translated, by Mrs Rhys Davids and others, as 'the Brahma walk' or 'the Brahma faring'. It is the same word as we get in bodhicarya. Brahmacarya is the more archaic term, before there was a specifically Buddhist vocabulary, and bodhicarya is, of course, the specifically Buddhist term.

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: Another term I've seen is 'Brahma-faring'.

S: Yes. that is brahmacarya. It is a translation of the same word. The higher reaches of the arupa-loka, the formless world, are called brahma-lokas.

Sagaramati: Is that the pure abodes?

S: No, they are at the peak of the world of form, not the formless world.

Subhuti: Is it the brahma viharas?

S: No, the brahma viharas take you into the rupa dhyanas. The pure abodes are - again, here is an overlap between the spiritual and the Transcendental. In Helsinki, interestingly enough, someone was very keen on going into all this, and we did. The Anagami, the non-returner, is reborn in the higher reaches of the rupa-loka, but he has a partly transcendental consciousness, because he has broken the lower fetters. Therefore, he is in a mundane state, though a highly refined one; at the same time, he is partly in a transcendental state. So these spheres or worlds or abodes in which the Anagami is reborn are not a part of the rupa-loka in the ordinary sense, but directly intermediate between the rupa-loka and Nirvana. Hence they are called pure abodes - suddhavasas.

Subhuti: You talked of Sukhavati in terms of ...

S: Yes, one can look at Sukhavati in the same sort of way. To make it a little clearer, it is like the case of the enlightened human being: externally he belongs to the kama-loka because he has a gross physical body, but his inner consciousness is an enlightened consciousness, therefore he belongs to the transcendental world, the transcendental dimension or Nirvana. So when an Anagami dies, what happens? He is reborn in the rupa-loka, which means he no longer has a gross physical body belonging to the kama-loka; he has a 'body', a subtle spiritual body belonging to the higher reaches of the rupa-loka, and his consciousness, of course, remains partly transcendental consciousness, and from there he directly realizes Nirvana.

These worlds which are, as it were - obviously language is very approximate and clumsy here - inhabited by the Anagamis after death before their realization of Nirvana, are called pure abodes. They are technically part of the rupa-loka, but inasmuch as the consciousness of their inhabitants is not a rupa-loka consciousness entirely - it is partly a transcendental consciousness - they do not, in that sense, belong to the rupa-loka.

ABC: What were the brahma-lokas? ...

S: Brahma-lokas are subdivisions of the formless world.

Sagaramati: Do these worlds give in at all to the gravitational pull?

S: Oh, yes. In the case of the suttavasa, of course, where the Anagami is, the gravitational pull of the Unconditioned predominates over the gravitational pull of the conditioned.

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Subhuti: But that doesn't mean, does it, that all the worlds that are higher than that, or more refined than that, are outside the pull of the conditioned? (One can experience) the arupa-loka ...

S: Oh no, not at all. They are still very much within it.

: That's because it's got this residual transcendental consciousness, which works in it.

5: Yes. In the case of the Anagami, he has that transcendental consciousness continuing, and that eventually completely counteracts what little gravitational pull of the conditioned remains in that rupa-loka which he inhabits.

There is another interesting point. What does Nanda say after his realization - or, rather, what does the text say?

'Now the venerable Nanda being thus worried, humiliated and despised since he was called "hireling" and "menial" by his comrades, living alone, remote, energetic, ardent, making the self strong, in no long time attained in this very world, himself realizing it by full comprehension, that for which the clansman rightly goes forth from home to the homeless, even that unsurpassed goal of the Brahma-life, and so abode.'

What is interesting about that description, especially the end part? It says that he realized or attained 'that for which the clansman rightly goes forth... even that unsurpassed goal of the Brahma-life'. What is rather striking here?

ABC: He didn't set out to ...

S: No, not that.

: It doesn't mention Nirvana ...

S: It doesn't mention Nirvana; it doesn't say exactly what it is; it doesn't give any definition, or even a name, to it. It says 'that' for the sake of which people rightly leave home for the homeless life. It simply says 'that' - that which is the 'goal of the Brahma-life'; and of what that goal is, what its content is, not a word is said. That is what has sometimes been called the metaphysical reticence of early Buddhism. It doesn't even say it's Nirvana or that it's Enlightenment. It is 'that' for the sake of which people start on their spiritual quest; that which is the goal of the spiritual life, whatever it is. But it is not defined or precisely indicated. It is left, as it were, a conceptual blank, because it can't really be defined. But whatever it was, Nanda realized it. The verse says:

'Who hath o'er passed the slough, crushed down the thorn of lust, and come to reach illusion's end, That monk by pain-and-pleasure is not stirred.'

There is a bit of discrepancy between the verse and the prose, inasmuch as the prose episode definitely represents Nanda as ascending through a series of worlds, as it were, each representing a successively higher, [131] more refined sublimation of feeling. But the verse speaks much more in terms of an abrupt cutting off of the coarse feeling, the unsublimated energy itself. It amounts ultimately to the same thing, but this latter language can be a little dangerous and can be misunderstood - as though you merely cut off the gross, which often means just repressing or suppressing the gross, and it remains unsublimated; and then, having repressed the gross, you are just making a willed, forced effort which doesn't get you very far; whereas the episode of Nanda makes it clear that the energy is to be progressively sublimated through a series of successively higher levels.

Devaraja: The story is also very indicative of the Buddha's attitude. From my association with other traditions, (I think that, in those traditions,) because of Nanda's situation and his desires, there would have been a moralistic putting down of what he wanted, but the Buddha just took him and showed him something better, without passing any value judgement on him.

S: There is not much point in ticking people off about their attachment to the lower realms, unless it is possible for them to have at least a glimpse of the higher realms in one form or other, one way or another. The Buddha could have given Nanda a real sermon, but he didn't. He just showed him. There is certainly no moralistic element here.

It is interesting that, throughout the Pali Canon - in fact, throughout Buddhist literature and tradition generally - there is a very clear distinction between the lower and the higher levels, which is made abundantly clear again and again, that to be entangled on the lower levels is not very satisfactory in the long run - you really do suffer - and the higher you can get the happier you will be. This is made crystal clear. But there is no moralizing, no attempt to make you feel guilty for your attachment to the lower levels and no puritanical attitude towards life on those levels. This is also very clear.

ABC: It couldn't be - If you are on a higher level, you just see it as it really is. And if people

are ticking you off, you wonder where they are.

Sona: But Nanda was worried, humiliated.

S: Yes, but he was worried and humiliated at being called a menial - at the idea that he was following the spiritual life and meditating just for what he could get out of it, not for the sake of Nirvana but for something less than Nirvana.

There is a story in the Pali Canon in connection with Ambapali, who afterwards became a nun and gave her heart and treasure-house to the Buddha. She was the daughter of a man who looked after a mango garden, and even when she was a little girl she was extraordinarily beautiful, so she attracted a great deal of attention. The elders, or city fathers, as we would call them, of the town Vesali - quite a thriving city - realized that Ambapali's beauty might be a source of disturbance and trouble, so they held a meeting about it (to decide) what to do with her. In the end they concluded that it would not be right for any one man to have exclusive possession of such a beautiful woman. Therefore she should be set up in a house and garden of her own, where she could entertain [132] as many men as she wanted, so that all of them could enjoy her beauty. This was all done at the expense of the city council! This reflects a completely non-puritanical attitude. Such an attitude is found, not only on the part of the Buddha and his disciples in the tradition, but in the whole culture and society. You could hardly imagine that sort of thing happening even in modern England.

That reminds me of another little incident, then we must pass on. I think it was in 1952 I went to Bombay and met a very famous Indian film actor and producer-director who was thinking of producing a Buddhist film, and he wanted to talk to me about it. He was very interested in asking questions about Buddhism generally. There was one question that was very much on his mind. He had recently been to the Ajanta caves. As you know, the interior of the Ajanta caves is covered with beautiful fresco paintings. He said he was very pleased to see the paintings and so on, but one thing really troubled him: he said, 'These cave temples are supposed to be painted by monk artists - bhikkhus.' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'That's what I thought; but when I looked round I saw all sorts of paintings there that I should not have thought monks would have done.' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Well, there were paintings of elephants and flowers, trees, birds and deer, but there were also paintings of women - very beautiful women. How is it that monks did those things? Maybe their minds were going in the wrong direction even though they were monks, and they painted those pictures of women for that reason. What is your explanation?'

I had to think quickly, because I had never thought about it before; I hadn't been to Ajanta. So I said, 'As far as I can see, it's quite simple. The monk was merely depicting the natural world in all its beauty. So he depicted mango fruits, he depicted lotus flowers, elephants, trees and leaves and shoots. Woman is also part of the natural world. Why should he not depict her? He just depicted her as he depicted a fruit - a banana, a peach, a mango or a lotus flower; he depicted her, too, in exactly the same spirit. Why leave her out?' He was quite satisfied with this.

I must say, when I gave him that explanation, I wasn't altogether convinced myself (laughter), but I thought it over afterwards and thought, 'This would have been the right attitude. Whether it actually was the monks' attitude, I am not in a position to say! And after I went to Ajanta and saw the paintings, I concluded that my explanation had been the right one,

because it was clear that the monks had depicted the women in the same spirit as they depicted the flowers, the fruit, the trees and the animals. They were just as sensitive to their beauty of line and curves and all that kind of thing; it was certainly sensuous, but it wasn't sensual. This was quite noticeable: whoever those artists were - presumably they were monks - when they came to depict the women in the painting, they did them just as they had done the flowers, the trees, the birds and the animals, as part of the natural scene. They saw no reason to reject them. The overall attitude was the same towards all. This, I felt after seeing the paintings, was actually the case. There was no special emphasis on the women. They were done in the same spirit as all the other objects were depicted. But you certainly wouldn't find that, I think, in most Western art. It was just the natural world in all its beauty, with nothing excluded.

That was very much the Buddha's attitude here: sure, the Sakyan girl is beautiful, the heavenly nymphs are still more beautiful, the gods of even higher realms are more beautiful still; just go up and up, [133] appreciating these more and more beautiful forms until you come to the formless, which is, paradoxically, more beautiful still. But there is no need to depreciate anything.

Is there any further query on all that? It is a rather important episode, so we have rather lingered over it. What about the attitude of the Sakyan girl? "May you soon be back again, young master." She doesn't seem to have much faith in his ability to keep it up.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now at that time as many as five hundred monks, headed by Yasoja, had come to Savatthi to see the Exalted One. These new arrivals, greeting the resident monks and arranging about bed and lodging and bestowing their bowls and robes, caused a great noise and hubbub. So the Exalted One called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Ananda, what is all this noise and hubbub? Methinks it is just like fishermen catching fish.' 'Sir, it is these five hundred monks, headed by Yasoja, who have just arrived at Savatthi to see the Exalted One. These new arrivals ... have caused this great noise and hubbub.' 'Then, Ananda, do you go and in my name say to those monks: "The Teacher calls your reverences."' 'Very well, sir,' replied the venerable Ananda to the Exalted One and (went and did so). 'Very well, your reverence,' said those monks to the venerable Ananda, and went to the Exalted One ... and sat down at one side. As they sat thus the Exalted One thus addressed those monks: 'Monks, what means this great noise and hubbub? Methinks it is just like fishermen catching fish.' At these words the venerable Yasoja replied to the Exalted One: 'Sir, these five hundred monks here have just arrived at Savatthi to see the Exalted One. These new arrivals, greeting the resident monks and arranging about bed and lodging and bestowing their bowls and robes, caused this great noise and hubbub.' 'Go, monks! I dismiss you! Ye deserve not to dwell with me!' 'Very well, sir,' replied those monks to the Exalted One, and they rose up, saluted the Exalted One with the right side, put their lodgings in order, took bowl and robe and went away on their alms-round to the Vajjians. After finishing their alms-round there, they came to the river Vaggumuda. There they set up leaf-huts and began to spend the rainy season.

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Now the venerable Yasoja, at the beginning of the rainy season, thus addressed those monks: 'Reverend sirs, we have been dismissed by the Exalted One for our own good and profit, out

of compassion for us, because he felt compassion for us. Come now, reverend sirs, let us so dwell that the Exalted One may be well pleased with our way of dwelling.'

'Very well, reverend sir,' replied those monks to his reverence. Accordingly those monks, living remote from men, energetic, ardent, with the self made strong, in that very interval of the rainy season realized all the threefold lore.

Now the Exalted One, after staying as long as he wished at Savatthi, set out on his rounds for Vesali, and later on in the course of his rounds reached Vesali. Thereupon the Exalted One took up residence at Vesali in Great Grove at the Hall with Peaked Roof. And the Exalted One, grasping with his thought the thoughts of those monks living on the bank of the river Vaggumuda on paying attention to it, called to the venerable Ananda. 'Ananda, this quarter seems to me illuminated. All radiant, Ananda, this quarter seems to me. Pleasant it is for me to go to and to think of that quarter where on the bank of the river Vaggumuda those monks are dwelling. Ananda, you might send a message to those monks, saying: The Teacher calls for your reverences. The Teacher is anxious to see your reverences.'

'Very well, sir,' replied the venerable Ananda to the Exalted One, and went to a certain monk, and on coming to him said: 'Come thou, good sir! Go to where are those monks dwelling on the bank of the river Vaggumuda, and on coming to them say, "The Teacher calls for your reverences. The Teacher is anxious to see your reverences."'

'Very well, sir,' replied that monk to the reverend Ananda, and just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his arm stretched out, even so did he vanish from the Hall with the Peaked Roof at Great Grove and appear before those monks on the bank of the river Vaggumuda (and delivered his message). 'Very well, good sir,' replied those monks and setting their lodgings in order and taking bowl and robe, just as a strong man ... even so did they vanish from the bank of the river Vaggumuda and appear at Great Grove in the hall of the Peaked Roof and face to face with the Exalted One.

Now at that time the Exalted One was seated wrapt in motionless concentration. Then those monks considered thus: In what condition is the Exalted One now abiding? Then concluding that he was in motionless concentration they also one and all sat down in motionless concentration.

And the venerable Ananda, when the night was far spent, the first watch now drawing out, rose from his seat and, throwing his robe over one shoulder, put his [135] hands together and raising them, said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, the night is far spent; the first watch is drawing out. The newly arrived monks have long been seated. Sir, may the Exalted One exchange greetings with the newly arrived monks?'

At these words the Exalted One remained silent.

Then as the night was far spent and the second watch was drawing out, the venerable Ananda rose from his seat and repeated his words, saying, 'Sir, the night is far spent. The second watch is drawing out.' And for the second time also the Exalted One was silent.

Then again, as the night was far spent, and the last watch drawing out, dawn being already at hand and the night wearing a face of gladness, the venerable Ananda, rising from his seat ...

said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, the night is far spent, the last watch is drawing out, the dawn is at hand, the night wears a face of gladness, the newly arrived monks have long been seated; let the Exalted One exchange greetings with the newly arrived monks.'

Then the Exalted One roused himself from that concentration and said to the venerable Ananda: 'If you knew, Ananda, it would not occur to you to ask thus much. Both I, Ananda, and these five hundred monks have all of us been sitting in motionless concentration.'

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

In whom the thorn of lusts is overcome, Also abuse, stripes and imprisonment, Like mountain standing imperturbable, That monk by pain-and-pleasure is not stirred."

S: (That is) another fairly lengthy episode. It seems to be later in the Buddha's life than any episode that we have gone through so far. Why do you think this is?

: Ananda ...

S: Because Ananda is the attendant, yes. It is known that Ananda was the attendant during the last 25 years of the Buddha's life, so it is towards the end of the Buddha's life. We can also gather that from the fact that the Buddha is at Sravasti - at Savatthi - where he spent more time than at any other place, and that five hundred monks come to see him, headed by Yasoja. Apparently they have not met him before, and no doubt the Dharma is spreading very rapidly because five hundred of them arrive all at once. We must not imagine, of course, that they were arriving at a great big monastery. There is the Jetavana, the grove in Anathapindika's park, which he has handed over to the Buddha and his disciples, and no doubt there were little leaf huts among the trees, and perhaps in the fine weather monks even stayed at the foot of the trees. The 'lodgings' which are referred to are simply the spots where they can stay. You mustn't think of lodgings in the sense of a little self-contained flat for them, or anything of that sort.

The word vihara, by the way, simply means a lodging, from the verb [136] viharati, meaning to dwell, to stay. So no doubt the park was a few acres in extent, and no doubt there were plenty of trees in the grove and quite a few little huts, so the Buddha used to live there with a few companions and people would come and see him there, but on this occasion five hundred bhikkhus turned up, all to see the Buddha. So there was quite a hubbub, because they were saying hello to the monks who normally resided there with the Buddha, and finding a place to stay - a corner in a leaf hut or an unoccupied tree root - and there was a lot of talking and noise.

So the Buddha, who no doubt was quietly seated somewhere, heard all this and wanted to know the reason. He says, rather contemptuously: 'It doesn't sound like monks arriving, it sounds like fishermen catching fish.' As you can imagine, the fishermen would, of course, be fishing in the river, not with a quiet rod and line but with nets. So when the net is drawn in, and there are a lot of fishermen and a big catch, they get very excited, there is a lot of shouting and exchange of remarks and so on. To the Buddha, the monks arriving sound like that. He is so displeased with them, apparently - and also for their own good - that he just dismisses them and sends them straight away. So their first encounter with the Buddha is a

reprimand, and being sent right away.

So they travel quite a long way. Sravasti is in north-western India; they go right across to Vesali, which is in present-day Bihar, and they go on their alms rounds there and then they find a place near by, on the bank of a river, to spend the rainy season retreat. They make little leaf huts for themselves, and Yasoja, at least, realizes that they have done wrong; they were badly behaved when they arrived at Savatthi; so he suggests that they all spend their rainy season retreat in a proper manner, a manner of which the Buddha would approve, and devote themselves energetically to their practice. So that is what they do. At the end of the rainy season retreat, the Buddha, having apparently spent it in Savatthi, also moves to Vesali, and he comes to know - it is suggested here by his supernormal faculties - how those monks have been spending their time and that they have become spiritually advanced; so he sends for them. Ananda has to send a message.

Then they come to see the Buddha, and what happens then is quite interesting. The Buddha is seated in motionless concentration, so the five hundred monks who are by this time spiritually very advanced, perceive that he is sitting in motionless concentration, so they sit down with him and also enter into motionless concentration. But Ananda is there, and Ananda, who was the Buddha's personal attendant, was responsible for making the Buddha's appointments, ushering in visitors and seeing that the Buddha saw them all in the proper order and separately when necessary, and that there wasn't too much of a rush. Ananda was very good at arranging all those sort of things. He had also a vast memory; he remembered everything that the Buddha said. That is why, after the Buddha's decease, he was able to repeat all the teachings. But Ananda, in certain respects, was not very developed. He was not particularly good at meditation, and he had no psychic powers. So Ananda was not aware that the Buddha was seated in motionless concentration, nor was he aware that the five hundred newly arrived monks were also seated in motionless concentration.

So, at the end of the first watch of the night, he coughed: 'Ahem!' like that, and said, 'Lord, the monks have come.' He thought the Buddha didn't know, that he was not taking any notice of them and maybe the monks would be a bit upset, so he nudges the Buddha and says, 'Lord, maybe you [137] should exchange greetings with the monks. They have just come; they have been sitting here a long time.' That was the polite custom. There are many references to this in the Pali text - that friendly greetings are always exchanged, and the Buddha always exchanges friendly greetings with monks as they arrive. Ananda thinks that the Buddha hasn't noticed that the monks have arrived, and that he is unintentionally being perhaps a little rude; so he reminds the Buddha, rouses him or tries to rouse him, saying, 'The monks have arrived. They have been sitting there a long time. Don't you think you ought to greet them?' But the Buddha remains silent; he just goes on meditating. At the end of the second watch, Ananda says the same thing, and again at the end of the third watch, he says, 'Look, the whole night has passed. These poor monks have been sitting here the whole night and you haven't even greeted them. Don't you think you ought to?' But what does the Buddha say? He says, "'If you knew, Ananda, it would not occur to you to ask thus much.'" What does he really mean?

ABC: (He means:) 'If you knew, we have really been in communication anyway.'

S: Yes, right, that's it. Ananda is suggesting that the Buddha should greet the monks, but the greeting has been going on all the time, and Ananda didn't know it. They have been, as it were, on this higher level, on which they all are - the level of motionless concentration; they

have been greeting one another all the time, but Ananda hadn't noticed it, he wasn't aware of that due to his own lack of psychic development. That is the important point here; that the real communication is being in the same mental state.

So the Buddha and the five hundred monks are on a level where greetings are unnecessary. There is no question of rudeness or ignoring. The Buddha knows that they are there, and they know that the Buddha knows that they are there. They know that the Buddha is in motionless concentration. The Buddha knows that they are in motionless concentration. They know that the Buddha knows that they are in that state, and he knows that they know that he knows that they are in that state. So there is no need for greetings and friendly exchanges and inquiries; they are in perfect communication. But Ananda doesn't know that.

The important point here is that the real greetings, the real exchanges, the real communication, take place when you are on the same mental and spiritual level. What a change in those monks!

There is a little link with the previous episode, isn't there? - one of those little editorial touches. What do you think that is?

: Goading.

S: Goading, yes. Just in the same way that the other monks teased Nanda, jeered and scoffed at him, for being a hireling and a menial, and that helped him and goaded him on, in the same way the Buddha peremptorily dismissed those noisy monks and sent them away, and that helped them. They realized that it was for their own good - or Yasoja realized it and they acted accordingly.

The five hundred monks, not to speak of the Buddha, seemed to have no trouble about sitting. They just sat there the whole night without any difficulty.

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What about the udana?

'In whom the thorn of lusts is overcome, Also abuse, stripes and imprisonment, Like mountain standing imperturbable, That monk by Pain-and-Pleasure is not stirred.'

Once again, there is not a very close connection with the prose episode; though certainly the Buddha and the five hundred monks were all sitting there 'like mountains', without moving, in the motionless concentration.

Is there any further query on that episode, or on anything that we have done this morning?

Devaraja: Do you think there is (break in recording) ... tangible, so that they could more easily relate to it? Often it is quite difficult for people to understand ...

S: What precisely are you referring to?

Devaraja: I mean when you talked about the higher realms of the kama-loka leading into the lower realms of the rupa-loka, and so on, up through, like that ...

S: But how did you mean that as being helpful at the centres? - that we should explain this, do you mean, or exemplify it in some way?

Devaraja: Yes, or exemplify it in some way. It often helps people to have something like that. They say, 'Ah yes, I have had experiences of the higher aesthetic experience to relate to.' It seems more tangible than, say, teaching about various spiritual fetters and so on. It's something positive that people can relate to, and it makes it more exciting.

S: But the fetters are also quite positive, because you feel them. But the two need to be correlated, inasmuch as you rise to the higher levels by breaking the fetters that are preventing you getting there. But, at the same time, it is a bit odd if you just talk about breaking fetters but not about the levels that you experience when those fetters are broken. If you know about those levels, obviously it encourages you to break the fetters. You have a reason to break them. You're not just breaking them in a void.

Devaraja: It's also giving people - because people have almost no immediately apparent valid reason for breaking through ...

S: Except sheer intellectual conviction, which is not all that common. It presupposes a rather thorough and detailed knowledge of the Dharma, and also being convinced of the truth of that. Would you suggest a few more illustrated charts?

Devaraja: Not necessarily, but perhaps it ties in with what you were saying about the care and attention paid to, say, the furnishing and painting of a centre, and also perhaps more use of that kind of material in the class situation when talking about meditation, Dharma and so on.

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S: In other words, you mean giving a more explicit content to the higher levels?

Devaraja: Yes. Giving some indication of the experiential rewards, so as to encourage people to make that attempt.

S: Ideally, the Order Members themselves who are around should be rather deva-like, and obvious examples of the experiential rewards, in terms of health, happiness and general buoyancy.

Devaraja: Sure. (Pause; someone gestures? Laughter.)

S: That is also to be considered!

Devaraja: I remember something you said in a class situation. You said that the criterion of the good is not the agreeable. I feel that may be true, but the point is that I find it very discouraging to people. They think, 'Oh my goodness, it's going to be hell all the way.'

Sagaramati: You're taking it out of context.

Devaraja: Yes, but I think people interpret it that way.

Sagaramati: That's their fault.

Devaraja: Not entirely.

Sagaramati: I don't know, I don't agree. In the context - I mean I was talking more about greed and things like that; you might feel good, but it doesn't mean to say that you are doing it right.

S: (It doesn't mean) that you are good. Right, yes. The agreeable is not necessarily the skilful. That is what you were saying, presumably?

Sagaramati: Yes.

Devaraja: But I must say, at the time the way it came across was that you could live a spiritual life but you were not necessarily going to enjoy it.

S: Well, that's true.

Devaraja: Yes, that may be true, but at the same time one should emphasize that there are rewards from leading a spiritual life. That's what I mean about this thing of the different levels. It encourages people to find it exciting.

Sona: Not only that, but it might give a wider view of life for people.

S: In what way?

Sona: In that people might be encouraged to look into life and what there is in it.

ABC: And what they can discover themselves.

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S: Lama Govinda makes a very interesting point in his Psychological Attitudes of Early Buddhism, referring to the Abhidharma and the analysis of the different planes and states, and so on. He says that this clearly shows, among other things, that the possibilities of happiness in the universe are far greater than the possibilities of suffering; that there are more happy planes than unhappy planes, to put it crudely.

Sagaramati: The discussion of priti, as well, are very good. We used them last time. Instead of giving the analogy of soap powder and so on, I gave the analogies out of Guenther's Abhidharma.

S: It is quite good, if we have readings, to have happy, joyful readings rather than grim reminders. (Voices agreeing)

Devaraja: It might perhaps be given an Eastern context with, perhaps, a greater degree of underlying positivity. Given our spiritual heritage, which is such a gloomy one, people need to get a feeling of fun out of life.

S: Not to forget Archway! At the same time, it has to be rightly done. I remember Vangisa once, with the best of intentions, decided to read through the Sutra of the Happy Land. It was a beautiful description of the Happy Land and the jewel trees and golden cords and what not, but he went on for about 45 minutes, and it really dragged and people got thoroughly bored

and fed up. So it has to be carefully done. But readings especially should be inspiring, joyful and happy. (We shouldn't have) extracts like 'These twenty-five things, O monks, you must give up'!

Subhuti: Or 'This body is a bag of impurity'!

: Or the Bodhisattva's reservation, to a beginners' class.

S: It is just a question of skilful means and tact. I must also admit that it isn't always easy to find those sorts of passages in some parts of the Canon, especially the Pali Canon. (I have been) thinking we need our own little anthology of texts for reading, because sometimes we have to really hunt to find something suitable. But it would be good to have an anthology of passages from the different Buddhist Scriptures, all of about the same length, any one of which could be read as the reading in the course of the Sevenfold Puja, and each of which was inspiring; not simply informative, not just doctrinal instruction, but definitely inspiring and encouraging. We need an anthology of extracts of that kind, each taking, say, from three to five minutes to read, more or less complete in itself.

Devaraja: Under various possible headings, like 'Happiness', or 'The Goal', or something like that.

S: There is a very nice chapter in the Dhammapada, called Sukhavagga, the Section of Happiness, that is very suitable for reading. 'Happily do we dwell amongst the ailing, free from disease among the ailing,' and so on. 'We live joyful, like the avassara devatas, we who have nothing to call our own.' These sort of passages are very suitable. 'We dwell free from grief among the grieving,' and so on. There is a whole series of verses of this kind.

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"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now on that occasion the venerable Sariputta was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, keeping mindfulness before him. And the Exalted One saw the venerable Sariputta so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

E'en as a mountain crag unshaken stands Sure-based, a monk with his illusions gone Like very mountain stands unwavering."

S: That is quite a short, simple little episode. 'Keeping his mindfulness before him' - that is usually, or often, understood as meaning 'keeping his mindfulness fixed on his in-and-out breathing' - using concentration on the in-and-out breathing as a means of entering into the absorptions, the dhyanas. As in the previous verse, the monk is compared to the mountain.

There doesn't seem very much to say on this episode or on the verse.

Are there any queries? (Long pause.) It is a very plain, straightforward comparison, the mental imperturbability of the monk, in this case Sariputta, and the stability of the great mountain. You get this sort of comparison quite often in the Pali Canon; it is almost an obvious one.

Let us go on to the next episode, then, which is very similar.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindikā's Park. And on that occasion the venerable Moggallāna the Great was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, having mindfulness concerned with body well established within himself. And the Exalted One saw the venerable Moggallāna the Great so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

If mindfulness of body be well fixed, The monk restrained in the six spheres of sense, Ever composed, could his nibbana know."

S: There is a slight difference here, you see. Here Moggallāna is described as 'having mindfulness concerned with body well established within himself' - mindfulness concerned with the body and its movements being one of the basic forms of mindfulness, as described in the Satipatthana Sutta: that is to say mindfulness of the body and its movements, then mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of thoughts and mindfulness of the different formulations of the teaching.

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So Moggallāna is especially practising mindfulness with regard to the body, whereas Sāriputta was practising mindfulness with regard to the in-and-out breathing.

Subhuti: You gave as the fourth of the four foundations mindfulness with regard to the different formulations of the Teaching. I thought the fourth one was usually (rendered as) something like 'contents of mind' or 'state of mind'.

S: Er - contents and state?

Subhuti: Well, yes, the objects of mind.

5: Yes; dhammas means objects of mind, so it can mean thoughts in the ordinary sense, and it can also mean Dhammas in the sense of teachings or formulations of the teachings. The Satipatthana Sutta and other sources proceed to give a sort of list. It refers, say, to the five skandhas, to the seven bodhyangas - so it's clear that dhammas also includes not just thoughts in the ordinary sense but doctrinal categories or formulations of the Teaching. It's only in this way that the satipatthana practice becomes a complete practice, including vipassana as well as samatha, because it's via the recollection of, say, the teaching of the five skandhas that Insight arises.

Subhuti: Does this correspond to what you call ...

S: Awareness of Reality, yes. Perhaps we should go through that Satipatthana Sutta some time. It is a quite important one. What does the Buddha say?

'If mindfulness of body be well fixed, The monk restrained in the six spheres of sense, Ever composed, could his nibbana know.'

There are several points here that need to be commented on. 'If mindfulness of body be well

fixed, The monk restrained in the six spheres of sense' - you notice 'the six spheres of sense', salayatana; that includes the mind, the mind in the ordinary sense, so mindfulness of the body should not, perhaps, be interpreted too narrowly, so as to apply just to the physical body, but to the whole psychosomatic being as it exists on a fairly low level; perhaps not only the physical body but at least the kamavacara, the sense sphere, consciousness, as well. Or, one might say, the physical body and the consciousness bound up with that body on the body's own level. This is only suggested here; it is not directly stated, but it does say, 'If mindfulness of body be well fixed, The monk restrained in the six spheres of sense' - the six spheres, which includes the mind, the mind in the ordinary sense, the mind as a sixth sense, not as a higher consciousness - 'ever composed, could his nibbana know.'

Subhuti: Isn't it also the fact that if you are mindful in your body, you are automatically restrained in (the senses)?

S: Yes, you cannot be restrained in the senses unless you are first of [143] all mindful of the body, which of course includes the senses. This is often called guarding the doors of the senses. You keep watch. You are quite aware of your ear and your eye and your nose and your tongue and your skin, and you are quite aware that 'Ah! through the eye such-and-such impressions are reaching me; there is a possibility of such-and-such sensations and such-and-such desires arising; therefore let me be careful.' If you keep up this sort of watchfulness with regard to the doors of the senses, then there is less chance of unskilful thoughts arising. But that presupposes that, first of all, you are aware of the body itself as a whole, as it were.

Devaraja: And so (of) where it's going, where one's placing ...

S: Yes, and how the senses are operating, what they are perceiving, what impressions are coming in, whether they are impressions which are likely to give rise to skilful or unskilful mental states, and so on. So the Buddha is making an apparently quite extraordinary statement: that, if you can practise mindfulness of body, if that is well fixed and established and if, as a consequence, you are restrained in the six spheres of sense and consequently composed, you could know Nirvana. Nirvana is very close; you have a distinct possibility, then, of realizing Nirvana. It also suggests that having mindfulness of body well fixed, restraining oneself as regards the six spheres of sense, and being ever composed, is quite difficult. In other words, if you could be completely mindful with regard to the body and its movements, and exercise a continual watchfulness over the six senses - not only the five, but the six - and be all the time composed, then you might well be on the threshold of Nirvana. The Buddha doesn't say definitely; he says, 'could his nibbana know'. It becomes a possibility. It comes within reach, as it were.

Devaraja: I find that I can practise to some extent the being careful of not placing myself in situations wherein there are certain stimuli which bring about unskilful states of mind, unskilful thoughts. But maybe I'm not setting about it in the right way in terms of eradicating those unskilful thoughts - but I sometimes find that I feel, in trying to get rid of them, very blocked off, very - I don't know - quite deadened. I assume I must be practising in the wrong way, but ...

S: Well, it boils down to what I said, in effect, earlier on - yesterday or the day before: that practice can't be purely negative, just trying to get rid of something. It must consist essentially

in the effort to develop something positive or to allow something positive to manifest.

Devaraja: So, at the same time as trying to get rid of (unskillful states) one should cultivate the opposite.

S: Cultivate the opposite, yes. Or, perhaps, think much more in terms of cultivating the positive than of getting rid of the negative. I think this is quite an important point. I sometimes refer in this connection to something that a friend of mine in Bombay used to say, whom I used to stay with and who was quite a yogi in his way and had quite a few followers and a small movement. He wasn't a Hindu by birth, he was a Parsee, that is to say a Zoroastrian, though he was very much under Hindu influence, but he retained certain Zoroastrian emphases. One of the things he used [144] to say was this: 'People' (meaning mainly Hindus - religious people in India) 'are always talking about detachment. They are always emphasizing detachment - "be detached from this" and "be detached from that". According to me, that is all wrong. You should be talking and thinking in terms of attachment. Attach yourself to the Buddha, attach yourself to what is positive. Attach yourself to meditation. Don't always be thinking negatively and speaking negatively in terms of detachment from this, that and the other.' He felt that this was a most unhealthy emphasis in the usual type of Hindu teaching, its emphasis on detachment and giving up. He said the emphasis should be much more on attachment. I think there is a great deal of truth in that.

This is why I think it is much better to think in terms of the cultivation of the positive nidanas; think in terms of cultivating faith, cultivating delight, cultivating joy, cultivating ecstasy. That is much better than thinking in terms of getting rid of craving. Why do you crave? Because you're neurotic. So it is not just a question of getting rid of the craving, but of stopping being neurotic. And how do you stop being neurotic? By being healthy. So it is a question of being healthy. Everything else follows.

Unfortunately, the language of many Buddhist texts is negative, at least grammatically, though the implications are usually positive. For instance, in the Dhammapada there is a verse:

The relevant line here means: 'Hatred only ceases through non-hatred' - ,through non-hatred. But, though it is grammatically negative, it means love. Hatred ceases only through love. But if you say, 'Hatred only ceases through non-hatred', that is a quite negative emphasis. If you say 'Hatred only ceases through love', that is a quite different sort of statement. But the word is actually, by non-hatred. If you think of it in terms of love rather than non-hatred, that is much better.

The positive emphasis is very important. We were talking about this earlier, this morning, in connection with making the centre bright and beautiful, as it were.

Has anyone else ever felt anything about this - felt that the emphasis was a bit too much on the negative side - give up this and give up that? (Murmurs of assent.) Well, so you should (give up), but it is a question of the way of going about it: that the giving up is a consequence of something positive, of positive growth and positive development, not an end in itself. Otherwise, all spiritual life looks like a process of whittling away - whittling away all your negative aspects - and then it doesn't seem as if there will be much left.

ABC: I found I couldn't get anywhere, thinking negatively, detaching and cutting the negative side away. It was only when I started trying to do something positive that there was any energy there to do anything.

Sona: You were saying about why the Buddha said 'could his nibbana know'.

S: Well, he means that if you can do these things - if you can fix your mindfulness of body well and be restrained in all six spheres of sense and remain ever composed - you already have made so much progress, by virtue simply of doing these things, that the attainment of Nirvana becomes [145] a practicable possibility for you. You could then go on to realize Nirvana; which is quite a statement.

Sona: I was just thinking that that corresponds, to some extent with hatha yoga and pranayama. In the first stage, one becomes mindful of one's body and learns to control one's body, and then to control the sense spheres so that one can, through pranayama practice ...

S: Of course, it isn't control in a forcible sense. It is that you are aware of the senses, first of all. You are aware of the way in which they are functioning. You are aware of the impressions coming in through the different senses. Therefore, you can be selective and on your guard as to the particular mental states that arise in accordance with particular stimuli coming through the senses in the form of impressions, or giving rise to stimuli. Therefore, you can eliminate unskilful, and cultivate skilful, reactions and responses.

Sagaramati: Is this anything to do with the, like, fanning out of consciousness? It says somewhere that, instead of looking within, you should look without. Does that mean coming out to really be aware what is actually coming into the senses?

S: Yes, that is true, one could look at it like that. I don't know whether I had that in mind, but it could certainly be looked at like that: be aware of the world, too, as a form of awareness of things, see what's coming in, what's happening; what effect it is having on you, how you feel about it, how you're reacting, how you are responding. Be alert and aware and alive to what is happening. Very often, people seem sort of half dead. They don't properly know what's going on. They don't even know what their own reactions are; and their reactions are so sluggish and dull sometimes.

Devaraja: It's quite frightening; it's only over the last year that I suddenly realized how I am so powerfully affected by what's around me. Before then, I don't think I was aware of what was happening.

S: Partly because one is so identified with it.

Devaraja: How do you mean - from before, or sort of in the ...?

S: No, when you're strongly stimulated, or affected at least, by the environment - by the things around - it is difficult to separate yourself from the environment, and therefore to see how you are being affected. You take it that you are like that; you are, as it were, part of that.

Devaraja: Ah - yes!

S: Like when it's a dismal, rainy day and you feel dismal and rainy inside. You don't think, 'Ah! It's dismal and rainy out there, and that is affecting me in here.' No, you feel part of the dismal, rainy scene. (Long pause.)

Devaraja: There's a sort of a - I think it must be a kind of micchaditthi to the effect that (one is told one) should be able to move through these situations untainted. People say, 'Oh, you should work with it, move through it, it's all really in you.' But I'm starting to feel that it's not like that at all; it's literally like picking up infections.

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S: I think it does become more and more evident that a change of surroundings means virtually a change of mind, and that it is quite unrealistic to expect the person to do everything from, as it were, the subjective side, without the help of at least a certain minimal adjustment in his or her surroundings and way of life, environment and social involvement or non-involvement and so on. In most cases, it's quite unrealistic to expect the individual to do everything himself or herself in unchanged surroundings. This is one reason why we go away on retreat - just to give yourself a better chance, at least for a while.

Subhuti: It also implies that there's no evolution for individuals, in the sense that we must change the whole of society - the cultural environment.

S: Yes! At least, you must make holes in the society, or at least you must create for yourself a bit of elbow room within the society, so that you're not so much affected by it. I saw this very much in Helsinki. It applies much more definitely there than here. (There,) the social and economic system is so tough and demanding and difficult to escape from, and so stifling. Here, it's comparatively relaxed; in New Zealand, even more so. But even here, it can be quite difficult.

It really means that, ultimately, there has to be a radical change in the whole social system, just so that people can begin to function as individuals in a better way, and can grow more. It's true that the Marxists go to the other extreme. (They say) that it all depends upon changing the social and economic set-up; then the individual becomes just a function of the particular kind of social and economic organization. But it is also completely fallacious to say, 'It all depends upon you. Just change your attitude towards it.' That is really quite fallacious.

Subhuti: It's a cyclic relationship, isn't it? - this consciousness of being; and each determines new phases of the next.

S: Perhaps dialectical rather than cyclic.

Subhuti: Dialectical, right.

ABC: What does 'dialectical' mean?

S: (Pause) Oh dear. Well, it's a sort of challenge-and-response relationship which is progressive. For instance, I take up a certain position rather strongly. You take up an opposite position. But eventually I sort of modify your position, but then you in turn perhaps modify mine, and then my modified position modifies still more your modified position. In this way,

we develop and go on. That is sort of dialectical.

Subhuti: In The Three Jewels you talk about the basic philosophical position of Buddhism being that consciousness determines being. It has always seemed to me that that restricts the vision of things - that there is much more of an interplay than is suggested by that. Because the Marxists ...

S: It is also true that being determines consciousness. But, ultimately -

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Subhuti: - from the point of view of growth ...

S: - consciousness does determine being. But within a given situation it is usually reciprocal. But consciousness does determine being in the way that we were talking about yesterday, when Devaraja mentioned about this hilarious energy coming up in the midst of a most impossible situation. This is an example of consciousness not exactly determining being but not being determined by being, even though it would appear that being cannot but determine consciousness - but it doesn't. Consciousness escapes, it transcends. So, in this sense, consciousness has the last word.

Subhuti: From the point of view of the Spiral, consciousness must ...

S: - come out top in the end.

Subhuti: Yes, that must be the determinant.

S: Yes. But in the average situation, in the case of the average person, certainly consciousness is, while not finally determined, certainly strongly influenced, by the objective world. And that has to be taken into consideration.

: You could also say that it's influenced by other people's consciousness, through ... So it's not a case of there just being one consciousness determined (with all the state of being. It tends to be a bit ... to the different states of consciousness ...) (inaudible)

S: But, for the individual consciousness, other people's consciousnesses are part of the objective world, because it's part of what they have to reckon with, coming from outside themselves.

Subhuti: So when you use 'being', you mean, in other words, objective sort of ...

S: Yes, when I say 'being', I include also the objective consciousnesses - not just inanimate nature but people as well, whose level of consciousness may well be much lower than yours and therefore affecting yours.

So, if people really want to get on, it is not just a question of doing their bit subjectively, but also of making certain external, objective changes. You can't completely abstract yourself from the situation, environment or society in which you are, and carry on with your development as though that society or environment didn't exist. It's not possible to do that, for most of the time. That is why the wanderers wandered!

Anyway, how did we get on to that?

Devaraja: Well, it came from what I said about this micchaditthi about taking the whole responsibility for a given state of mind.

S: You are responsible only to the extent that you deliberately put yourself in a certain situation, when that was not perhaps necessary when you could have put yourself into a situation which would have been more conducive to your development.

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Subhuti: It seems quite noticeable on retreats that the first couple of days you have to adjust - that your conditioning has been for a certain situation, and when you are removed from that situation you really feel it, and you experience the difference in times of sleeping (and so on). (Murmurs of agreement)

: It's like part of one is still stuck in the past situation - (you) start to catch up in a couple of days.

S: But this really means that, if there is to be individual development on a large scale - that is to say, individual development for a large number of fairly ordinary people - there will have to be quite far-reaching changes in the whole social and economic set-up. Because the majority of people just don't have the energy, or the ability perhaps, to cope or to develop in the midst of the existing set-up. All their energy goes into just surviving and getting by, not to speak of growing.

Devaraja: I think it would take quite major steps to modify their situation. A large factor in the unpleasantness and the difficulty of the situation that is created, which prevents them from spiritually evolving, is that people refuse to recognize certain things. I saw this very vividly once. Coming from Aryatara, I was at Victoria station in the rush hour, and they had a display of weekend sailing dinghies in the forecourt. And there were all these people with very strained looks on their faces, rushing back, commuting back to their homes outside London, obviously not happy; and there were little clusters of people hanging around the dinghies. I thought, 'Why do they want to get these dinghies? So that they can have pleasant weekends, which will make their lives in London more acceptable. But to have these dinghies, they've got to involve themselves in a situation in London!' So all it meant was that they (should) cut back on their demands, and then ...

S: Yes, you've got to buttonhole them one by one and explain this all to them and convince them. I think that is slightly different from what I was talking about. The majority of people just don't seem to have the stamina even to be able to change the environment, without, for instance, you perhaps doing something about it for them first, or showing the way, or creating some sort of a model.

Devaraja: I felt you were saying that the external situation of the environment - the trappings and so on - I almost feel a lot of the time like it's a self-created trap.

S: Yes, self-created in a collective sense; not self-created by the individual. It is a system which the whole group has created, so the whole group has got to change. But you can't begin to change the whole group until you've got a preponderance of individuals in the group or, at

least, until the influence of the individuals in the group preponderates. Until then, you can only create little models here and there, and show others what you are doing to create your own society within a society. And then others, hopefully, will see that yours is much better - much better for the individual, that is, within that society.

To refer to Helsinki again, I really noticed this there. Apparently, the little climate or atmosphere that had been created at the Friends [149] Centre was quite different from anything that the people coming along were able to experience outside - much more positive, much more friendly; the Finns not being particularly positive or friendly or communicative. And word about this was beginning to get around, as though there was a little environment in which they could unfold, open up a bit, in a way that was not possible elsewhere. At least something like that can be done. But I think the majority of people are just unable to develop very much until they are placed somehow or other in somewhat more favourable circumstances, at least for a short while as on retreat; and then, as Subhuti said, you do notice them beginning to change and unfold a bit, without even any definite steps taken on their part. Just by being in that more positive, helpful and supportive environment, they start changing, almost - I mustn't say automatically, but spontaneously.

: It's like removing the conditions that were causing one state of mind, and putting other conditions in which ...

S: Right. Admittedly, for any real growth and development to be possible, there must be the conscious individual effort, but before you can make that you must be placed, in most cases, in that sort of environment where you can be your natural best; whereas most people cannot be their natural best yet. When their circumstances are a bit more favourable, most people will be a bit more individual than they actually are. But once you have been enabled to be your natural best, you have to make the conscious effort from that point onwards. Otherwise you become just a bit deva-like.

What one would really like to do eventually is to turn the whole world into a great retreat centre.

Sagaramati: a Pure Land.

S: A Pure Land, yes. This is what Chairman Mao claims to have done as far as China is concerned, but I'm afraid I have my doubts ...

Sona: In some ways, though, when you live in a very unhealthy situation, you realize how much you are suffering, whereas if it's just all right ...

S: It's probably better that it should be really bad than mediocre. Because if it's really bad, there's more incentive to get out of it. But if it's not too bad, you compromise and carry on somehow, and get used to it.

Subhuti: There's a whole web of micchaditthis connected with this sort of thing. There is that one in particular - that a situation has got to be quite unpleasant for you to be able to grow in it; but you can be in a situation which is positive but still challenging and stimulating. It's not easy, necessarily, but it's not actively unpleasant.

S: No, it's encouraging.

Subhuti: I mean, a retreat isn't an easy situation, but it's a positive situation.

S: A healthy situation.

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Subhuti: I think also what Devaraja was saying - we've probably covered it enough - but the point that people do tend to see the spiritual as being totally removed from the world; (they think) you don't have to alter or affect the environment or society at all; (that) it's all a matter of your own individual effort - which is ...

S: Not only that, but your mental attitude.

Subhuti: And (that) there's a sort of strict dichotomy between the Marxist approach and the spiritual approach; (that) they're in head-on collision. I think we've probably got more ...

S: Usually, Buddhists are regarded as belonging to the second camp, as opposed to the first. Whereas really, they're not, otherwise the Buddha wouldn't have started a Sangha at all. The Sangha is the ideal environment - an environment of other people similarly dedicated, similarly committed. But you come across this attitude quite often in pseudo-spiritual groups - 'You don't have to give up anything, dear, you just have to change your attitude towards it' - you hear this sort of thing time and again. 'You don't have to change anything or leave anything; just stay at home, work at your job in the same way as you always have, but change your attitude, dear; that's all you have to do.'

Subhuti: What I think is a micchaditthi related to that is things like 'It's not the gift, it's the thought that counts'; that's another one.

S: When someone brings you a couple of miserable buttercups, instead of a proper bouquet! It's true that it's the thought that counts, but if the thought is really there the thought will find a full and ample practical expression. It's as if you invite someone for a meal and (offer them just) maybe a piece of toast or something like that and say 'It's the thought that counts'! Some pseudo-spiritual circles are so full of these ideas and sayings, it becomes quite sickening. It's so false, it's so fake, so pseudo. It puts one on the spot sometimes, if one's not careful. Sometimes you have to be quite rude to refute it, especially if some dear old lady says it with a nice, kindly smile. (Laughter.) Or when she gives utterance to some dreadful micchaditthi, and you correct it and she says, 'Ah well, it's all one' - you know 'everything is true'. What can you do? That's the sort of thing one is up against.

Sona: I had a similar experience talking to an Indian ...

S: Oh, Indians are very good at this.

Sona: She was telling me all about Buddhism.

S: They usually do!

Sona: She kept coming out with lots of micchaditthis. I couldn't say anything. It was over

breakfast. There wouldn't have been much point.

S: But certainly this micchaditthi about 'It's only your mind that you have to change, and then everything will be all right' - this is not so much a micchaditthi; there is a certain sense in which it is [151] true; but it is so unfairly loaded on that side that it becomes quite unreal and impractical, so one has to protest against it. Circumstances do make a difference.

: ... (they are) applying it to the wrong level; they apply it to ordinary things, whereas really it should be applied to ...

S: It's all right to speak that way to a budding Bodhisattva - or maybe to a comparatively experienced Bodhisattva - but not to the miserable beginner, who is making his first faltering start. It is almost cruel to say it to him. (It's as if) he says, 'I'm working in a factory and there's noise all the time. I find it very upsetting; I get very resentful,' and you say, 'Ah, just change your mental attitude!' It's really quite cruel. You should say, 'Change your environment. Get out of it. Do anything to get out.'

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground. Now at that time the venerable Pilindavaccha was wont to accost the monks, calling them 'menials.' Then a great number of monks ... came to the Exalted One and said this: 'Sir, the venerable Pilindavaccha accosts the monks, calling them "menials."'

Then the Exalted One called to a certain monk, saying, 'Come, thou monk! In my name say to the monk Pilindavaccha, "Good sir, the Teacher calls for you."' 'Very well, sir,' replied that monk to the Exalted One ... and went and did so. 'Very well, good sir,' replied the venerable Pilindavaccha to that monk, and came to the Exalted One... As he sat at one side the Exalted One said this to the venerable Pilindavaccha: 'Is it true, Vaccha, as they say, that you accost the monks, calling them "menials"?' 'Yes, sir.' Then the Exalted One, after turning his attention to the former dwelling of the venerable Pilindavaccha, said to the monks, 'Monks, be not annoyed with the monk Vaccha. It is not from any inward fault that Vaccha calls the monks "menials". Monks, in five hundred births in succession Vaccha was reborn in a brahmin family. His use of the term "menial" is long engrained by habit. That is why this Vaccha accosts the monks with the term "menial."' Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

In whom there dwells no self-deception and no pride, Whose lust and selfishness are gone,
who is desireless, Whose wrath is put away, whose self hath cool become, He is a brahmin,
he a recluse, he is a monk."

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S: What do you think the Buddha meant when he said, 'Monks, be not annoyed with the monk Vaccha. It is not from any inward fault that Vaccha calls the monks "menials". Monks, in five hundred births in succession Vaccha was reborn in a brahmin family. His use of the term "menial" is long engrained by habit. That is why this Vaccha accosts the monks with the term "menial"?'

ABC: Perhaps he could see it was wrong but his habit's become so engrained he can't even stop that superficially.

S: It seems to me that the Buddha is being a bit ironical. I think he often is, but the irony is often missed. In other words, the Buddha is in a way saying, 'It's much worse. He calls the monks menials not just because of an inward fault of this life itself, but due to a conditioning, going back through five hundred previous lives - a conditioning of pride and superiority and arrogance.' So perhaps indirectly the Buddha is really ticking off that monk.

You could look at it differently, but I think the Buddha's irony is to be taken seriously. It is an indirect way of telling Vaccha that it is an inward fault, and a very serious one. It is also a gentle dig at the brahmins, of course, and at the brahmin mentality - the superiority complex.

Also, in the verse, the Buddha says:

'In whom there dwells no self-deception and no pride,... He is a brahmin.'

Devaraja: If you interpret it non-ironically, there wouldn't be much connection between the verse and the episode.

S: Right. Also, if you interpret it non-ironically, there is not much wrong with the brahmin attitude of superiority and of addressing others in that way - if it was a mere neutral conditioning, with no ethical significance; if it doesn't represent an unskilful mental state; if it's merely habit in a purely neutral sense. But surely the Buddha can't mean that. Therefore, I think it must be ironical. Brahminical pride and arrogance, of course, were a byword in those days, especially among the Buddha's disciples. You can just imagine the Buddha saying, 'Don't think that he is addressing the monks in this way out of any inward fault; it's simply that he's been a brahmin for five hundred lives, and everybody knows how arrogant the brahmins are!'

'In whom there dwells no self-deception' - perhaps that's also important - 'no self-deception and no pride'. Perhaps Vaccha didn't realize how arrogant he was being; didn't realize the extent of his brahmin conditioning, whether in this life alone or in this life and previous lives.

'In whom there dwells no self-deception and no pride, Whose lust and selfishness are gone, who is desireless, Whose wrath is put away, whose self hath cool become' ...

This is a very typical idiom in early Pali Buddhism. The self which has become cool - *sitabhava*; passion and desire and craving being regarded as a sort of heat, a fever almost, and as you get rid of those [153] you become cool. This is the sort of idiom appropriate to a hot country, where coolness and shade are pleasant, where you feel relaxed and refreshed in the cool shade. So it is as though, after the heat and fever of the passions, becoming free from them is like going into the cool shade of a tree out of the heat of the sun.

'Whose self' - whose whole self - has become cool; the fiery, blazing, burning passions all having become extinguished ...

'He is a brahmin, he is a recluse, he is a monk.'

The last line is quite interesting. The Buddha here equates these three ideals, the brahmin, the *sramana* and the *bhikkhu*. I said something about the *brahmana* and the *sramana* yesterday. The *brahmana* is the more orthodox, Vedic word or term for the spiritual ideal, the ideal man,

a term which the Buddha has tried to spiritualized. The sramana - that is the non-Vedic term for the same spiritual ideal. And the bhikkhu is the somewhat later, specifically Buddhist, term for that same spiritual ideal. So, if you do these things - if in you there is no self-deception, no pride, and so on - then you are fulfilling that spiritual ideal which is indicated in one way or another by these three different terms: the term brahmin, the term sramana, the term bhikkhu.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground. Now on that occasion the venerable Kassapa the Great was staying at Figtree Grotto, and for seven days was seated in cross-legged posture, having attained a certain concentration of mind. Then the venerable Kassapa the Great, at the end of the seventh day, roused himself from that concentration of mind. Having done so he thought: Suppose I were to enter Rajagaha for almsfood. On that occasion as many as five hundred devatas were busy at work getting alms-food for the venerable Kassapa the Great. But the venerable Kassapa the Great, rejecting those five hundred devatas, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Rajagaha for alms-food. Now at that time Sakka, lord of the Devas, was desirous of giving alms-food to the venerable Kassapa the Great. So he took upon him the likeness of a weaver and plied his thread, while Suja, daughter of the Asuras, filled up the shuttle. Now the venerable Kassapa the Great, as he went on his rounds from house to house, came to the dwelling of Sakka, lord of the Devas. And Sakka, lord of the Devas, from afar saw the venerable Kassapa the Great as he came. On seeing him he went out of the house to meet him, took the bowl from his hand, entered the house, took rice from the pot, filled the bowl and gave it back to the venerable Kassapa the Great. That alms-food was of various broths, various sauces, a mixture of various broths, flavourings and sauces. [154] Then this thought occurred to the venerable Kassapa the Great: I wonder who this being is, that has such magic power. Then he thought: It must be Sakka, lord of the Devas. Being sure of it he said to Sakka, lord of the Devas: This is your deed, Kosiya! Do not so again! 'But, Kassapa, sir, we too have need of merit. We too have use for merit!' Then Sakka, lord of the Devas, did reverence to the venerable Kassapa the Great, saluting him with his right side, and mounting into the air thrice uttered this verse of uplift in the sky: 'Ah! best of gifts! On Kassapa the gift is well conferred!' Now the Exalted One, with deva-hearing, purified and passing that of men, heard Sakka, lord of the Devas, thrice uttering this verse of uplift in the sky. And at that time, seeing the meaning of it, he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

The monk who quests for alms, supporting self, Who hath none else to keep, a man at peace
And ever mindful, - such the devas envy."

S: That seems to be the general significance of this little episode that the devas envy the monks; that the monk's life, especially the life of the monk who has realized the Truth, is superior even to that of the gods, and that even the gods envy that kind of life.

One could say that one purpose of episodes of this sort - and there are quite a few of them in the Canon - is, as it were, to demote the gods, to show people that the gods, who are merely having a happy time in heaven, who live long and are more powerful than human beings, are not on the same level, spiritually speaking, as the monks who are leading the spiritual life and trying to realize Nirvana. It is a sort of object lesson in their relative inferiority, so as to impress upon the minds of ordinary people that the spiritual values are much superior to mundane values, in however refined or exalted a form.

It also occurs to me, just reading this - I hadn't thought of it before - that, as you may have noticed, in the Pali texts the king is always addressed as 'Deva'. Unfortunately, it is usually translated as 'Your Majesty', but the mode of address for a king is 'Deva'. The kings are regarded as gods, divine beings, and in fact still are in India. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi tells the story that when he was on tour in south India - I think it was in Malabar - trying to encourage people [155] to work for the independence of India, he was in a certain village and was catechizing the people and trying to stir up their political consciousness, and he asked an old woman, 'Do you know who governs you, who governs this country?' And she said, 'Oh, some deva.' That was all she knew. She didn't know that it was the British government, or that it wasn't an Indian government; some deva governed, some divine power.

So the king, in those days and subsequently, was addressed as 'Deva'. So representing the devas - and remembering that kings are referred to as devas - as inferior in merit to the spiritual personage could be regarded as a subtle social-cum-political criticism, that the people shouldn't think of that way of life as the ideal one. The ideal one was that devoted to spiritual values. Actually, it applies to both, but if kings are like gods because they are more powerful than ordinary men and women and have more pleasures at their disposal because they are richer and better known, so in the same way with the gods. As the king is to ordinary human beings, so the gods are to the kings. It is just a difference of degree, not of kind. So the episode is saying, as it were, that you shouldn't be impressed merely by the difference of degree. The gods are no better than you are. They are just a bit more powerful, a bit longer-lived. They have a few more pleasures at their disposal, just as the king has. Essentially, they are the same as you. But the arhant, the enlightened man, is completely different. He is a different kind of being; he is a new man. He is the one you should respect, not someone who is just richer or more powerful or longer-lived than you. You should worship the holy men, not the gods. Even the gods themselves worship the holy men.

This sort of passage, then, represents an attempt to re-orient the ideal of the average person, from the devas, who represent simply worldly values carried to a higher degree, to the spiritual values which are completely different from the worldly ones.

ABC: Enlightenment doesn't depend on merit, does it?

S: Well, Enlightenment doesn't arise automatically from an abundance of merit, but an abundance of merit provides a useful and helpful basis for the gaining of Enlightenment.

ABC: Is that why Sakka is saying here that he has need of merit?

S: Not necessarily, because you are reborn in heaven as a god on account of your merits, merits accumulated when you were a human being. But when the effect of those merits is exhausted, you fall from that level. But if, in the meantime, you can accumulate more merits, you can prolong your stay there. It could be looked at in that way.

ABC: But would that be any good towards gaining Enlightenment?

S: Only if you had used those merits as a basis, as it were. For instance, you could say that on account of merits gained in previous lives, you are born as a human being, you are born free from sickness, you are born healthy. You can use that as a basis for a further attempt or effort to gain Enlightenment. But no amount of merits will ever add up to Enlightenment. That

represents a fresh departure, a fresh dimension. Merits are quite clearly distinguished from Wisdom and from Knowledge. But though, by simply accumulating merits, you don't eventually arrive at Nirvana or Enlightenment, you do not arrive there without them. They represent [156] a sort of intermediate stage on which you take your stand, when you try to realize Enlightenment. The meditative levels are in a way levels of meritorious mental states, but are to be distinguished from Wisdom, Insight and Enlightenment.

Sona: In that case, why do we give the merits away?

S: Because it's meritorious. (Laughter) But, more than that, if you give the merits away with the right motivation, it becomes an expression of Insight. If you give merits away, thinking that there is a real you who has merits and other people who don't have them, and that you are going to give them your merits, that increases your merits. But if you realize that, in fact, there's no you and no other beings, and therefore the whole idea of separate merits for you is ridiculous, and you transfer them because of that insight, then the transference of merits becomes an expression of Insight, and it strengthens the Insight by being expressed.

Therefore, the Mahayana transference of merits is a constant transference of merits which are constantly increasing. The more you transfer them, the more you have; and the more you have, the more you transfer, and you just go on, infinitely transferring, infinitely accumulating merits and multiplying merits.

: A sort of inexhaustible source of goodness.

Sagaramati: Isn't there a distinction between tainted merits and pure merits?

S: There is, yes.

Sagaramati: Is a pure merit more conducive to coming into contact with Nirvana?

S: As far as I recollect - I won't be completely certain of this - tainted merits come about as a result of good actions which you perform simply with the idea of getting to a higher state of mundane existence, but the pure merits are those which accrue from good actions - skilful actions performed with a view to their helping you to reach Enlightenment eventually, or providing you with a basis for that final attempt to develop Insight and Wisdom. For instance, if you practise dana with the idea 'By virtue of this dana, may I go to heaven', those are tainted merits. But if you practise dana thinking, 'By virtue of this practice of dana, may I eliminate my craving and develop non-craving, generosity, so that I may eventually become a Bodhisattva and a Buddha for the sake of all,' those are untainted merits, pure merits.

You could also say that early Buddhism's putting the holy man, the Enlightened bhikkhu, higher than the devas which were worshipped by the ordinary folk, is one aspect of the 'humanism' of Buddhism. That the enlightened man is superior to the gods - that is an important emphasis of Buddhism. This is why, in early Buddhist sculptures, the Buddha is often represented as attended by the two chief gods, Indra and Brahma - the two gods who were most widely worshipped by the Hindus. They appear as humble attendants of the Buddha, thereby representing, in a concrete form, the fact that even the highest mundane position is inferior to that [157] of the Enlightened man. Therefore, you see an enormous figure of the Buddha with Indra and Brahma very small figures on either side, carrying fly

whisks like servants.

: Wasn't that calculated to produce a negative reaction in the followers of those gods?

S: There's no record of that.

: It would be like putting Christ as some sort of servant for your new ideal.

S: I don't think it's really parallel, because the worship of the gods had no degree of doctrinal precision. It was folk religion - folklore, practically. So they were quite open to the suggestion that the enlightened man was higher than the gods. They weren't dogmatic about their belief in the gods or worship of the gods.

: Was it a new idea that the gods were mortal?

S: At the time of the Buddha, as far as one can see, most Hindus hadn't thought about it very much. They made the offerings and worshipped, but they probably hadn't thought. They had a vague idea or sense of these higher powers, but in most cases they hadn't really thought about whether they were eternal or were merely more long-lived than themselves - any more than the ordinary Christian, though this is probably on a somewhat higher level, thinks much about the nature of angels. Could any of you give, offhand, a theology of angels - what exactly they are, what their function is, their nature, their place? Probably not. You are just brought up with a vague belief that there are such things as angels; heavenly presences.

Devaraja: Were there any brahmin pandits, as such, in those times?

S: Oh, plenty.

Devaraja: Presumably they would have been angry about that treatment of (the gods)?

S: No, because the brahmins did it too, in a different way. They maintained that through the Vedic sacrifices, correctly performed by the brahmin, you could control the gods; that the gods were only humble assistants at the sacrifice. So this demoting of the gods was pretty general in those days. The brahmin was superior to the gods, in a sense, because he was the manipulator of the sacrifices. Some of them maintained that these sacrifices kept the whole natural order going. It became a very common primitive idea that, through your sacrifices, you kept the whole order of nature stable. It was through your sacrifices that the sun rose and the moon went through its successive phases. It was through your sacrifices that the rain fell at the proper time. Through your sacrifices you controlled the gods; this was the brahmin theology. So they didn't mind the gods being demoted, provided they could keep their position - but theirs was hereditary.

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Devaraja: This is quite common in relatively primitive cultures. I seem to have heard that the all-powerful, rather terrifying god figure is really a much later development, and that in primitive cultures they are often quite familiar and offhand with their deities because they feel that the power to change events resides in their hands.

S: This was probably a later stage of development in the case of Vedic Hinduism. As far as

we can tell, in the earlier stages the gods really were predominant and really were worshipped; but with the growth of ritual and of the importance of the brahmin as the performer of the rituals, the gods were gradually as it were brought under control and became less and less important. But this (demotion of the gods took place) in a quite different way (from the early Buddhist way). It was the earthly manipulator who was more powerful. Therefore, it wasn't very difficult for the Buddha to make the transition to the Enlightened human being as being more important than the un-Enlightened gods.

: (He was) the true brahmin?

S: The true brahmin, yes.

Theism as such - belief in one God who is all-powerful and has created everything - is certainly referred to in the Pali texts. It is called Issara nirmanavada. But it doesn't seem to have been widespread or very popular. Most people just worshipped spirits - yakshas and devatas, gods of different kinds, and respected the brahmins for their control over nature through their rites, and that was about all. They had a simple ethical code, various tribal beliefs and practices and traditions. But theism in the fully developed sense, though known, was not very important or influential in the India of the Buddha's day. It certainly wasn't the norm of religion as it became in the West - or as it became in India, to some extent, in the Indian middle ages, after the disappearance of Buddhism.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Now on that occasion, among a great number of monks, as they sat together in conclave under the spread of the kareri-tree pavilion, having returned from alms-quest and had their meal, this chance talk arose: 'Good sirs, the alms-questing monk, while going his rounds for alms-food, from time to time gets the chance of seeing forms delightful to the eye, of hearing sounds delightful to the ear, of smelling scents delightful to the nose, of tasting savours delightful to the tongue, of touching objects delightful to the touch. Good sirs, the alms-questing monk is revered, honoured, thought much of, worshipped and respected as he goes his rounds for alms-food. Come now, good sirs, we too will be seekers for alms-food, we too from time to time will get the chance [159] of seeing ... hearing ... smelling .. tasting .. touching objects delightful to eye, ear, nose, tongue and touch. We too shall be revered, honoured ... and respected as we go our rounds for alms-food.' This chance talk of those monks was still unfinished when the Exalted One at eventide, rising from his solitude, went towards the kareri-tree pavilion, and on getting there sat down on a seat made ready. On seating himself he said this to those monks: 'Pray, monks, on what talk are you engaged as you sit here together, and what was the chance talk still unfinished by you?' 'As we sat here, sir, this chance talk arose: The alms-questing monk, while going his rounds for alms-food, is revered... We too shall be revered ... as we go our rounds for alms-food... Such, sir, was the chance talk unfinished when the Exalted One arrived.' 'Monks, it is not seemly for you who as clansmen went forth in faith from the home to the homeless, to talk such talk. Monks, when ye sit together in conclave (one of) two things is to be done, talk in accordance with dhamma or the Ariyan silence.' Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

The monk who quests for alms, supporting self, Who hath none else to keep, - him devas envy, But not if he be set on praise and fame."

S: In the Buddha's day, there were two ways in which the monk could get his food. Either he could accept invitations to the houses of the lay people and be served with food there, or he could just beg from door to door. In the case of most monks, sometimes they had an invitation and sometimes they begged from door to door. But some very strict monks - Mahakassapa is a good example of the very strict monk - made a rule that they would never accept invitations to people's houses, because that was too easy and also they might get involved in worldly life. They might have to sit there a long time and get engaged in conversation; they wanted to avoid that. Such monks would make a vow that they would only go for alms from door to door and would not accept invitations. Such monks, inasmuch as they were stricter, were generally more highly regarded by the lay people as very austere monks. This is still the case in some Buddhist countries; a few monks do not accept invitations to the houses of the laity. Some bhikkhus whom I knew personally used to say it was a very time-wasting thing to do. First of all, the meal would be at about 11 o'clock, and you were expected to turn up at about 9 o'clock. You would go along at about 9 o'clock, and the people in the house would serve you with maybe a cup of tea and some betel or something like that, and engage you in conversation. Then at 11 o'clock would come the meal which would always be a long one and take a long time to serve. Then, after the meal, and sometimes before as well, you would have to chant various verses, and you might well have to give [160] a discourse to everybody and answer questions, and then there would be general discussion and conversation, family matters would be brought up and your advice asked; and usually you wouldn't get away before 4 or 5 o'clock. Serious-minded monks just didn't want to spend all that time - certainly not every day - in the houses of the laity, so they tried to avoid invitations, but the lay people were always trying to invite them, especially famous monks, to get them to their house and give them a meal. It conferred a sort of prestige on the family. So there was that sort of difficulty even in the Buddha's day: that, if you accepted invitations to people's houses, you could well be tied up for the greater part of the day. So very strict monks preferred not to do so; just to go for alms, begging from door to door. Those who did this were very highly respected.

This little episode represents a lot of monks talking about this and deciding to engage in the more austere, more ascetic practice, entirely for the wrong motives. First of all, when they went for alms, 'the alms-questing monk, while going his rounds for alms-food, from time to time gets the chance of seeing forms delightful to the eye, of hearing sounds delightful to the ear.' What do you think those forms and sounds were? It is not clear from this passage, but it is clear from many other passages: it is the forms and sounds of women. Many passages relate how monks, going for their alms, had the chance - strict monks would say the misfortune - of seeing women scantily clad, because they were taking their dip in the river and so on, and they were not very particular about keeping themselves properly covered. There are many references to this sort of thing in the Pali Canon, and to the danger which besets the monk as he goes for alms, that he might see scantily-clad women and hear them speaking. They might even call out to the monks if they were mischievously inclined.

So these wicked monks - or, rather, these worldly-minded monks are saying, 'This is one of the advantages of going for alms and moving about from door to door. We shall be able to see forms delightful to the eye and hear sounds delightful to the ear.'

ABC: Do you think they are being serious, or do you think they are having a joke?

S: No, I think they are being rather naive. They may not be very well-instructed. All sorts of

people came to the Buddha and somehow or other got ordination - if not during the Buddha's lifetime, certainly later on. Not only that, but they say, 'We shall be honoured and revered. People will respect us. So let us engage in this practice.' That is the way they were talking. And, of course, the Buddha comes to know about it. He doesn't directly tick them off, but he does say that when you gather together, that is not the way in which you should talk. You should either engage in discussion about the Dharma or remain silent. Then he utters a verse, which suggests that he is not very happy, at least, about their desire for name and fame:

'The monk who quests for alms, supporting self, Who hath none else to keep, - him devas envy, But not if he be set on praise and fame.'

The Buddha makes it quite clear in that final line what the position is. These ascetic or more austere practices are good, but not if you do them for the wrong motive.

I must say that I have also met bhikkhus from some of the South-East Asian Buddhist countries who genuinely believe that you should do certain things and keep up certain things simply in order to keep up the faith and respect of the laity. They genuinely believe that, and this is why they do those things, even though they may not really believe in them or have much faith in them themselves. I have had many a discussion with Theravada bhikkhus on this very point - as I mentioned in the case of my own shabby robe and the abbot of the Maha Bodhi Society centre in Calcutta not being at all happy about my shabby robe and saying, 'What will people think - what will people think of us - seeing you wear this shabby robe?' He meant, 'What will people think of us as bhikkhus?'

There is even a story I was told by Sangharatana from the days of Dharmapala. He said that when they were very young monks, novices, Dharmapala took them to Sarnath, which was in its very early days, and one day a big party of important pilgrims was expected. So Dharmapala got hold of all these novices and said, 'You sit under this tree; you sit under that tree. Close your eyes. Meditate. It will impress the visitors very much.' (Laughter.) So it is a bit like that. Sangharatana told me this story himself. But I didn't put that in my biography (of Dharmapala).

Subhuti: You seem to have been strongly moved by the story of Dharmapala.

S: Yes. There was that little episode, no doubt, but there are many others of a quite different character. No doubt he just wanted to enlist people's support for his renovation of Sarnath, but it is quite dangerous to try to do it in that way. It is like creating a false impression. But I'm afraid people are rather prone to this sort of thing.

Is there any query on all that?

: The 'Ariyan silence' - is that simply holding one's peace, or is it meditation?

S: It can be interpreted either way. Sometimes it is said that the 'Ariyan silence' refers to at least the second dhyana, in which there is no discursive mental activity, just the silence of the mind as well as of speech. (Long pause.)

Of course, later on in the history of Buddhism, as in the history of all religions, no doubt, once the position of the bhikkhu was established as very respectable and honourable, no

doubt many people took it up mainly for that reason. We find references to that even as early as the time of Asoka - that many people joined the Sangha seeing how well the monks were looked after, how much they were respected and what an easy time they had. Asoka, according to some sources, had to purge the Sangha of those unworthy elements.

There is a general principle involved here: that, when you become successful, a lot of people want to get on the band-waggon who would not have been with you out of belief in your cause when you were going through a much more difficult time in your earlier days. Nothing succeeds like success. So, once you become successful, you have to watch the sort of people who are joining you. So long as you are unsuccessful or not very well-known, or really having to work hard, you don't have to bother so much about the sort of people who are joining you - at least, not from that point of view. But once you become successful and well established, [162] and in a position to offer something material, you have to be very careful whom you allow to join you, because it may well be people who come entirely from the wrong motives.

This is why, even at this stage within the Movement, I think we should be very cautious about supporting people, and certainly not create the impression that it is quite easy to become a full-time Order Member and be supported by the Movement. This would tend, if it were too widely or well known, to attract people who wanted to make a little career of being a full-time Order Member - as, in earlier days, they made a career of being a monk or a priest in Christian Europe.

Even lay people sometimes change their religion for the sake of a purely worldly motive, like Henri IV of France saying 'Paris is worth a mass', and becoming a Roman Catholic whereas before he was a staunch Protestant; to get the throne of France, he converted himself into a Catholic. Paris meant - well, Paris is Paris; he said, 'Paris is worth a mass!' That was how he excused himself.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion, among a great number of monks as they sat together in conclave ... (as in previous sutta) ... this chance talk arose: 'Good sir, who knows a craft? Who has been trained in a craft? Which of the crafts is chief?'

Then some said thus: 'Elephant-craft is chief of the crafts.' Others said, 'Chariot-craft is chief...' Some said, 'Bowmanship,' others, 'Swordsmanship.' Some said, 'the craft of signs manual,' others, 'the craft of faultless calculation.' Some said, 'the art of reckoning,' others, 'the craft of engraving.' Some said, 'the art of poetry,' others, 'that of speculation about natural causes,' while others again said statecraft was the best of crafts. Such was the chance talk of the monks as they sat together in conclave.

Now the Exalted One, rising from his solitude at eventide ... went there ... and sat down on a seat made ready. Being seated he said this to those monks: 'Pray, monks, on what topic are ye engaged as ye sit here in conclave, and what was the chance talk left unfinished by you?'

(And they told him the subject of their talk.) Then said the Exalted One: 'Monks, it is not seemly for you ... to talk such talk. Monks, when ye sit together in conclave one of two things is to be done, either talk in accordance with dhamma or the Ariyan silence. Thereupon the

Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Who lives not by his wits, lightsome, fain for his weal, In sense controlled, in every way at liberty, Homeless, without thought of self, not hungering, When he has banished pride, that monk fares on alone."

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S: The language of the translation of that verse is a bit archaic. 'Lightsome, fain for his weal'. 'Lightsome' means light-hearted, not taking heavy, worldly matters too seriously. 'Fain for his weal' means really intent on what is good for him, having understood what is good for him.

What do you think of this list of crafts? It gives some idea of occupations in those days. Craft, or art as it is also translated, is vijja, which literally means knowledge, even science. Elephant-craft is knowledge all about elephants - how to breed them, how to train them, how to look after them, how to doctor their illnesses. Chariot-craft is how to build a chariot, how to drive it, how to control it, how to decorate it, all that sort of thing; and so on.

Devaraja: It strikes me from this passage and the last that coming into the Sangha were quite a lot of people who maybe hadn't been very dedicated wanderers before, just kind of ...

S: - swept into the movement, as it became more and more successful.

Devaraja: Yes, whereas before people were really dedicated. They went wandering around. They might meet the Buddha, or they might (go around) as in the verse.

S: You get this impression, even within the Buddha's own lifetime, that towards the end quite large numbers came in who were not, perhaps, completely committed and who sometimes created quite a lot of trouble for the Buddha and his true disciples. There was a very notorious band called the Band of Six; we may be seeing something of them later on. But certainly (there were) naughty and troublesome monks of many kinds. It seems to have been a very lively sort of religious world in those days in India.

What would be a corresponding development, say, in Western Buddhism? - what sort of talk, the best of this or the best of that? The best profession, or best make of car, probably.

: The best make of motorbike!

S: If we were thinking of buying a car or a motorbike for the Movement, that would be different. Then you would be discussing it quite objectively. But if it was merely a personal opinion, or conflict even, it would be another matter.

: Whether to have a sidecar or not. What a problem! (Laughter.)

S: However, there is a quite interesting antithesis or paradox:

'Who lives not by his wits, lightsome, fain for his weal, In sense controlled, in every way at liberty'.

Do you notice that? 'In sense controlled, in every way at liberty'. Usually, people think of

control of the senses as bondage, but here the Buddha is saying it's liberty. 'Homeless' - not only literally homeless, but with nothing in which we even mentally settle down; 'without thought of self, not hungering' - that is, hungering after worldly things; 'When [164] he has banished pride, that monk fares on alone.' That is not to be understood as 'fares on alone without any other companion monk', but that he fares on having left behind things like hungering, pride and so on.

ABC: What does 'pride' mean here? Is it just another addition to the list?

S: Mana; it is conceit, individualism in the narrow and negative sense, the individualistic attitude.

ABC: Egotism.

S: Egotism, one could say. 'Conceit' is probably better than 'pride', because it's mana. Incidentally, the actual text says 'Mara', but the commentary says 'mana'. It seems to me that it could well be 'Mara', because when he has banished Mara, that monk fares on alone, whereas before he was always accompanied by Mara. You could look at it like that. But this translation follows the reading of the word in the commentary, not the reading in the text as it has come down to us. Mana means conceit; Mara means the evil one, as it were. So, when he has banished Mara, 'that monk fares on alone', in other words, without Mara. That would make quite good sense; though mana makes sense, too. I am not quite sure why they have preferred mana to Mara. That is the translator's (decision).

Sagaramati: The fetters - is that the same mana?

S: It is the same, yes.

: And the poisons ...?

S: Yes, that would be mana, too. It is a quite basic sort of egotism, almost metaphysical rather than psychological. The conceit is not so much the feeling or experience of self so much as the feeling or experience of self as distinct from other selves, and therefore to be affirmed, if necessary, at their expense, or used as a basis for unskilful action with regard to them.

Devaraja: It's amazing how (a statement such as you have just made) helps to clarify so much. I often feel that people - we - tend to bandy words around, without making fine distinctions.

S: I think people always do. It is quite general, quite common - in the world at large, I mean. (For example), some texts speak of 'Buddha pride', but that is obviously pride in a completely different sense. Or (they speak of) 'family pride' in the sense of spiritual family pride.

Devaraja: That (carries) connotations of nobility.

S: Right, yes, self-respect.

Devaraja: It's almost as if your language, our conversation, our use of ideas is too abbreviated.

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S: Not only too abbreviated but too clumsy, too indiscriminating. We use words without regard for their finer shades of meaning. This tendency seems to be becoming more and more common nowadays. It is almost a fashion not to be precise in one's way of speaking, not to use words carefully; to blur the differences in meanings of words.

: Sometimes I pick people up on things, and I am usually accused of pedantry, being very prosaic, or it is dismissed with 'Oh, come on, you know what I mean'. It is really aggravating.

S: Yes, sometimes it's the person not even making an effort to communicate what they mean. But sometimes they don't know what they mean, there isn't a meaning there. They've just got a very vague, confused feeling or idea - or reaction. But they don't really know what they mean, and therefore they can't communicate it to you.

Devaraja: I think a classic example of this misuse of words, which grew for a while into a current micchaditthi in the Movement, was the use of the word 'irrational' for 'suprarational'.

S: Well, you must blame Dr Suzuki for that. I didn't know about this, actually.

Devaraja: Yes, I heard it used on quite a few occasions. Or 'irrational' was used for 'non-rational'. That sort of thing can lead to excesses of whimsical, illogical behaviour.

S: Right! For instance, Suzuki speaks of 'the irrationalism of Zen', and some people like Christmas Humphreys say that 'Alice in Wonderland is a pure Zen work' - things like that, which are absolutely silly, as though whimsy were the same thing as transcendental suprarationality. Suzuki is often very imprecise in his language, as we discovered when we went through Outlines of the Mahayana. But most people, in fact, are imprecise. Precision should be insisted upon where precision is appropriate. It doesn't mean being prosaic. In some situations, poetry is more appropriate than prose. But poetry should always be distinguished from bad prose. Bad prose should not be allowed to pass as poetry. This is what people often try to do; they try to smuggle their bad prose past your watchful eye under the label of poetry.

Devaraja: Right; and then they accuse you of being insensitive when you take them up on it!

S: Or not open to them.

Devaraja: (Again), 'irrational' is often used as a substitute for 'intuitive'.

S: Yes. Often, if you ask people what they mean, you discover they don't mean anything. There is no meaning. That is why they are having difficulty in communicating. They try to bluff you, almost, with some vague, general counter, as it were, which doesn't have any precise or real meaning. As you said, they often say, 'Well, you know what I mean.' But you don't; you must say, 'No, I don't; please tell me.' A few of our Friends are [166] rather prone to this, but we mustn't let them get away with it, and we mustn't be guilty of it ourselves.

Devaraja: That is why I found (what you said about) pride (being) like a self being affirmed at the expense of other selves, and also what you said about craving, hatred and delusion as Tibetan definitions, really highlighted (for me) exactly what was meant.

S: Of course, there is such a thing as pedantry, and we ought to try to avoid it. I think, in the

Movement at large, we are much less in danger of pedantry than we are in danger of imprecision, of careless talk, and vague, confused talk, and sloppy thinking. Let's have poetry by all means, but let our prose be really good prose.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Uruvela, on the bank of the river Neranjara, having lately attained supreme wisdom at the foot of the bodhi-tree.

Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated for seven days in one posture and experienced the bliss of release. Then the Exalted One, at the end of those seven days, rousing himself from that concentration of mind, looked over the world with the Buddha-eye, and the Exalted One saw, on looking over the world with the Buddha-eye, how beings were being tortured by divers torments and burning with divers burnings, with (the fires of) lust and malice and delusion. Then at that time, the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

This world, become ablaze, by touch of sense afflicted, Utters its own lament. Whate'er conceit one has, Therein is instability. Becoming other, Bound to becoming, yet in becoming it rejoices. Delight therein is fear, and what it fears is Ill. For abandoning becoming this Brahma-life is lived.

Whatsoever recluses or brahmins have said that by becoming is release from becoming, all of them are unreleased from becoming, I declare. But whatsoever recluses or brahmins have said that by the stopping of becoming there is a refuge from becoming, all such are not free from becoming, I declare.

It is due to the substrate that this Ill is produced. By the ending of all grasping there is no production of Ill.

Behold this manifold world, by ignorance afflicted, Come into being and thus with what has become delighted, Yet from becoming not released. Yea, all becomings Wherever and in whatsoever state they be, - All are impermanent and Ill and doomed to change. [167] In one who sees as it really is by perfect wisdom The craving to become is left; he joys not in its slaying. But craving's utter ending, utter stopping, is nibbana. Thus become cool, that monk, no more reborn, no more becomes. Beaten is Mara. He's won the fight, escaped all more becomings."

S: One gets a very definite impression from these two udanas. They are quite obscure. The construction, grammatically, is rather difficult, and it is almost as though the Buddha is struggling for expression, as though he is finding it quite difficult to communicate what he experiences and what he sees. Anyway, let's go through it.

It is just after the Enlightenment, don't forget, so it would be only natural that the Buddha was having great difficulty in bringing down his Insight to the level of ordinary thought and speech.

Subhuti: Did the Buddha remember these udanas just after his Enlightenment, and then report them, as it were?

S: Presumably, yes. Presumably he told them to Ananda, or maybe Ananda asked: 'What happened then? What did you say?' and so on.

This time, let's go through the verses first.

'This world, become ablaze, by touch of sense afflicted, Utters its own lament.'

This is a bit reminiscent of the Fire Sermon, where the Buddha says that everything is on fire, everything is burning, everything is blazing with craving, hatred and delusion. So

'This world, become ablaze, by touch of sense afflicted, Utters its own lament.'

It is suffering through the five senses.

'Whate'er conceit one has, Therein is instability.'

'Conceit' here seems to represent a different Pali word; conceit in the sense of a one-sided opinion, not very well-based. To the extent that one has conceits or opinions in this way, there is instability,

'Becoming other, Bound to becoming, yet in becoming it rejoices.'

(That is) a very obscure, almost elliptical, construction. 'Becoming other' - that is, changing into something else all the time. 'Bound to becoming': bound to this whole process of existence, which is a becoming, one thing after another. In Pali, by the way, bhava means existence [168] and also becoming. Becoming is existence, existence is becoming; it's a process, not anything static, not anything that remains the same.

'Becoming other, Bound to becoming, yet in becoming it rejoices.'

Presumably 'it' refers to the world: the world rejoices. In other words, people rejoice. Becoming is a source of suffering; changing from one thing into another is a source of suffering, changing from pleasure to pain is suffering, but still people rejoice and are delighted at this whole process of becoming, which is the world - mundane existence - itself.

'Delight therein is fear' ...

if you delight in something, you are afraid of losing it, so there's fear ...

'and what it fears is Ill',

because ill, dukkha, represents the cessation of what is delightful.

'For abandoning becoming this Brahma-life is lived.'

The whole meaning and purpose of the brahmacarya, the higher life, the spiritual life, is just to get away from becoming, from mundane existence, existence within the Wheel of Life.

Then the Buddha lapses into prose. According to the footnote, even the verse is only very

rough and ready verse.

'Whatsoever recluses or brahmins have said that by becoming is release from becoming, all of them are unreleased from becoming, I declare.'

In other words, you don't get released from the conditioned by means of the conditioned. You have to go to a completely different plane, a completely different dimension: that is, the Unconditioned. There is no psychological solution to psychological problems, only a spiritual, a transcendental, solution.

'But whatsoever recluses or brahmins have said that by the stopping of becoming there is a refuge from becoming, all such are not free from becoming, I declare.'

That is a quite remarkable statement, going quite against what is usually said in Theravada circles, or even in some texts. First of all, the word 'refuge' is mentioned, I think for the first time in the Udana. But, apart from that, the Buddha is represented as saying:

'But whatsoever recluses or brahmins have said that by the stopping of becoming there is a refuge from becoming, all such are not free from becoming, I declare.'

What does that mean? True, you don't gain release - that is, you don't gain Nirvana, you don't gain Enlightenment - by means of becoming; you [169] don't get rid of becoming by means of becoming. You don't get rid of the conditioned by means of the conditioned. But neither do you get rid of becoming merely by the cessation of becoming. You don't get release merely by the cessation of becoming. You don't get release merely by stopping that samsaric process. You don't reach the Unconditioned merely by stopping the conditioned, or annihilating the conditioned.

In other words, there must be a positive side to your spiritual life. This is what it really means. So, in a way, that negates the first episode of the Udana, when release or Nirvana is spoken of merely as the cessation of those twelve links of the Wheel of Life, and nothing is said about the positive links.

Subhuti: It's very Perfection of Wisdom-like.

S: It is. Well, 'perfect wisdom' is even mentioned. I don't know what the term for 'perfect' here is in the Pali, but it may be paramita; I'm not sure.

Subhuti: The fact that the twelve nidanas in the first episode are enumerated in reverse isn't intended as a sort of - it's not saying that you should go through the thing in reverse, should cut out ...

S: Well, this is the usual understanding of it, that merely by the cutting out you gain Nirvana.

Subhuti: But it's merely being enumerated in order to show the logical sequence and the connections, isn't it?

S: One could look at it like that, though usually that isn't the case; it isn't usually looked at like that. Usually, in Theravada circles, nowadays, or even traditionally, the cessation of those

twelve nidanas is regarded as equivalent to Nirvana itself. But this particular passage makes it quite clear that that is not so.

'But whatsoever recluses or brahmins have said that by the stopping of becoming there is a refuge from becoming,'

that is to say, merely by the stopping. One view would be eternalism, the other nihilism: that Nirvana does not come about by the prolongation of the samsaric process, in whatever form we find it, nor does it come about merely by the cessation of that process. It comes about only by the experience of a totally different element or dimension, which is that of the Unconditioned. Then the Buddha says:

'It is due to the substrate that this Ill is produced' ...

this dukkha, this stream of becoming. The 'substrate', presumably, is ignorance, basic spiritual ignorance and unawareness.

'By the ending of all grasping, there is no production of Ill.'

It is almost as though the non-production of dukkha is distinguished from the realization of Nirvana or Enlightenment, whereas usually in Theravada Buddhism the cessation of dukkha is regarded as Nirvana, though [170] not, of course, in the Mahayana. The Mahayana would not be content with a purely negative statement.

Again the Buddha breaks into verse of a sort:

'Behold this manifold world, by ignorance afflicted, Come into being and thus with what has become delighted, Yet from becoming not released. Yea, all becomings Wherever and in whatsoever state they be, - All are impermanent and Ill and doomed to change.

In one who sees as it really is by perfect wisdom The craving to become is left: he joys not in its slaying.'

That is also quite interesting. He doesn't rejoice in the slaying of craving. He doesn't have a sort of sadistic attitude towards his own weaker side. That is quite remarkable, in a way. 'He joys not in its slaying.'

'But craving's utter ending, utter stopping, is nibbana.'

That seems to contradict what has gone before. But nibbana in Pali, and in the Theravada tradition, could be regarded as the purely negative aspect of the attainment of Enlightenment or Supreme Wisdom and so on, which would mean that, in a sense, Nirvana was not enough; which is exactly what the Mahayana said later on, quite explicitly.

Subhuti: What you said about not having a sadistic attitude to one's own weaker side - that also then applies to the weaker sides of other beings; it applies to the whole compassion side?

S: Right, yes. In a sense, 'be compassionate to your own weaknesses'. It doesn't mean (that you should) give in to them, but (should) treat them kindly but firmly and try to eliminate

them. But sometimes you find people adopting a sadistic attitude towards their own weaker side. I remember a lecture by Christmas Humphreys at one of the summer schools. I have quoted this before, and some of you may have heard it. He described the spiritual pilgrim travelling up the mountain side to the peak, and he was describing how he lightened himself as he went higher and higher. He described this pilgrim as - these are his exact words - 'hacking off great bleeding lumps of self'. This is the sort of thing I mean. It doesn't sound to me at all healthy - 'hacking off great bleeding lumps of self', like a sort of spiritual butcher's shop.

So don't be harsh to yourself in this sense. It is really the good old superego, taking it out on the ego and the id, especially the id. So don't divide yourself from yourself, and allow your so-called higher self to be cruel to your so-called lower self. This is not spiritual development; this is not the way. Therefore, it is quite remarkable to find the Buddha saying:

'The craving to become is left; he joys not in its slaying.'

The joy here is sadistic joy, presumably. Certainly, you are happy that craving should come to an end, but you don't enjoy the slaying of it, you don't enjoy crushing your weaker side. That wouldn't do you any [171] good. To divide yourself into two and then one half establishing a victory over the other (would be) a very one-sided pleasure. That is not the sort of integration that one should be aiming at.

Devaraja: It reminds me a bit of - is it the fifth method of eradicating unskillful thoughts? - Going for Refuge with one's faith. There is almost that sort of feel about it, like taking all of you, changing all of you.

S: Yes. So be firm with yourself, but don't be cruel to yourself.

ABC: But surely, when craving's ended, that part of you doesn't exist? That energy is ...

S: Well, it exists, but as it were in a sublimated form. But if you are cruel to yourself, it prevents the process of sublimation occurring. You have made an irreparable breach and division because you as it were disown that other side, that other element. It's 'not you'. As long as you regard it as 'not you', there is no communication with it, no possibility of it developing into something higher, and of the higher absorbing its energy.

This is probably a quite important point.

ABC: You really have to accept yourself, even your failings.

S: It doesn't mean accept in the sense that you don't do anything about it.

ABC: You accept it's there.

S: You accept it's there, and your attitude towards it is coaxing and encouraging rather than harsh and repressive.

Devaraja: So much spiritual practice seems to be, or certainly has been, a form of self-hatred.

S: Yes, right.

Devaraja: I think in the early days of my practice a lot of what I did was really a form of self-hatred.

S: And self-punishment, which means guilt in ... (inaudible)

Sagaramati: I must admit, though, I'm a Nietzschean nature. Sometimes you've got to learn to detest yourself.

S: Yes, mm. Perhaps one should take it metaphysically rather than psychologically; not take the word too literally.

Devaraja: From the personal, positive attitude, what maybe helps more is to sort of laugh at oneself, laugh at the pomposity, the stupidity ...

S: Right. Until they seem so ridiculous that you just can't go along with them any more. Very often, people who have a harsh, sadistic attitude towards their so-called lower selves, are quite devoid of any sense of humour. They take themselves, in all senses, very seriously indeed.

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Devaraja: In a way, they are liable to suffer more.

S: So, again: 'Thus become cool' - again that word *sitabhava* ...

'Thus become cool, that monk, no more reborn, no more becomes. Beaten is Mara. He's won the fight, escaped all more-becomings.'

So there's no question of any passive attitude. 'Beaten is Mara. He's won the fight' - this is quite active and dynamic enough, quite virile enough, one might say, or heroic enough. But there's no element of masochism in it, no element of self-torture or self-punishment.

One could even say that this sort of self-torturing or self-punishing attitude is a sort of partial suicide; that you've a lot of resentment directed basically towards other people, but you can't let it out on other people, so you let it out to some extent on yourself; just as in some cases of suicide, when, of course, it is completely (true) that a desire to kill others becomes a desire to kill oneself. You can't kill others; either they are beyond reach or you don't dare to kill them, you can't think of killing them, so all that resentment and hatred is directed against oneself. So perhaps this sort of self-punishing, sadistic tendency mentioned here can be described as a sort of partial suicide. It's the same type of unhealthy attitude or unhealthy approach. There is a quite different feeling to a positive process of growth and expansion and development, and simply taking it out on oneself, punishing oneself or making oneself suffer. I think the Zen people do this quite a bit. There is nothing happy and unfolding about it. It is all grim, determined, sort of punishing, harsh.

: It certainly seems to be that way in the West.

S: Yes, and, I suspect, quite a bit that way in Japan - but not, apparently, in ancient China.

And, of course, if you do it to yourself, you tend to do it to other people as well.

So again, it comes back to this emphasis on developing what is positive in oneself and making that the central thing, rather than crushing out what is negative and making that the central thing.

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DAY FOUR Chapter IV - Meghiya

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Calika, on Calika Hill. Now on that occasion the venerable Meghiya was in attendance on the Exalted One. Then the venerable Meghiya came to the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and stood at one side. As he thus stood he said to the Exalted One: 'I desire, sir, to enter Jantu village for alms-quest.'

'Do whatever you think it the time for, Meghiya.'

So the venerable Meghiya, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Jantu village in quest of alms-food, and after questing for alms-food there returned after his rounds, and after eating his meal went towards the bank of the river Kimikala, and on reaching it, while taking exercise by walking up and down and to and fro, he saw a lovely, delightful mango-grove. At the sight of it he thought: Truly lovely and delightful is this mango-grove! A proper place surely is this for a clansman for striving (for concentration). If the Exalted One would give me leave, I would come here to this mango-grove to strive for concentration.

So the venerable Meghiya went to the Exalted One ... and sat down at one side, and as he sat thus he told the Exalted One (of his find and what he had thought) and said: 'If the Exalted One gives me leave, I would go to that mango-grove to strive for concentration.'

At these words the Exalted One said to the venerable Meghiya: 'Wait a little, Meghiya. I am alone till some other monk arrives.'

Then a second time the venerable Meghiya said to the Exalted One, 'Sir, the Exalted One has nothing further to be done, has nothing more to add to what he has done. But for me, sir, there is more yet to be done, there is more to be added to what I have done. If the Exalted One gives me leave, I would go to that mango-grove to strive for concentration.'

Then a second time the Exalted One replied, 'Wait a little, Meghiya. I am alone till some other monk arrives.'

Then yet a third time the venerable Meghiya made his request, and the Exalted One replied, 'Well, Meghiya, what can I say when you talk of striving for concentration? Do what you think it the time for, Meghiya.'

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Accordingly the venerable Meghiya rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side and went away to that mango-grove, and on reaching it plunged into it and sat down for the midday rest at the foot of a certain tree.

Now as the venerable Meghiya was staying in that mango-grove there came habitually upon him three evil, unprofitable forms of thought, to wit: thoughts lustful, thoughts malicious and thoughts harmful. Then the venerable Meghiya thought thus: It is strange, in truth! It is a wonderful thing, in truth, that I who in faith went forth from home to the homeless should thus be assailed by these three evil, unprofitable forms of thought, to wit: thoughts lustful, thoughts malicious and thoughts harmful! So at eventide he arose from his solitude and went to the Exalted One, and on coming to him ... said, 'Sir, while I have been staying in that mango-grove there came habitually upon me three evil, unprofitable forms of thought ... Then, sir, I thought: It is strange, in truth! It is wonderful, in truth, that I ... should be assailed thus!'

'Meghiya, when the heart's release is immature, five things conduce to its maturity. What five? Herein, Meghiya, a monk has a lovely intimacy, a lovely friendship, a lovely comradeship. When the heart's release is immature this is the first thing that conduces to its maturity. Then again, Meghiya, a monk is virtuous, he abides restrained with the restraint of the obligations, he is perfect in the practice of right behaviour, sees danger in trifling faults, he undertakes and trains himself in the ways of training. When the heart's release is immature, this, Meghiya, is the second thing that conduces to its maturity.

Then again, Meghiya, as regards talk that is serious and suitable for opening up the heart and conduces to downright revulsion, to dispassion, to ending, to calm, to comprehension, to perfect insight, to nibbana, that is to say, - talk about wanting little, about contentment, about solitude, about avoiding society, about putting forth energy; talk about virtue, concentration of mind and wisdom, talk about release, knowledge and insight of release, - such talk as this the monk gets at pleasure, without pain and without stint. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the third thing that conduces to its maturity.

The again, Meghiya, a monk abides resolute in energy, for the abandoning of unprofitable things, for the acquiring of profitable things, he is stout and strong in effort, not laying aside the burden in things profitable. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the fourth thing that conduces to its maturity.

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Then again, Meghiya, a monk is possessed of insight, endowed with the insight that goes on to discern the rise and fall, with the Ariyan penetration which goes on to penetrate the perfect ending of Ill. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the fifth thing, and these are the five things that conduce to its maturity.

Now, Meghiya, this may be looked for by a monk who has a lovely intimacy, a lovely friendship, a lovely comradeship, - that he will become virtuous, will abide restrained by the restraint of the obligations, be perfect in the practice of right behaviour, see danger in trifling faults, undertake and train himself in the ways of training. This, Meghiya, may be looked for by a monk ... that he will become virtuous ... that he will undertake ... the ways of training that he will get at pleasure, without pain and without stint, such talk as is serious ... about concentration of mind ... insight of release. This, Meghiya, may be looked for ... that he will abide resolute in energy ... not laying aside the burden in things profitable. This, Meghiya, may be looked for ... that he will be possessed of insight ... to penetrate to the perfect ending of Ill.

Moreover, Meghiya, by the monk who is established in these five conditions, four other things are to be made to grow, thus: The (idea of the) unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust; amity is to be made to grow for the abandoning of malice; mindfulness of inbreathing and outbreathing is to be made to grow for the suppression of discursive thought; the consciousness of impermanence is to be made to grow for the uprooting of the pride of egoism. In him, Meghiya, who is conscious of impermanence the consciousness of what is not the self is established. He who is conscious of what is not the self wins the uprooting of the pride of egoism in this very life, namely, he wins nibbana.'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Thoughts trite and subtle, taking shape, cause mind to be elated. Man, ignorant of these, with whirling brain, strays to and fro; But knowing them, ardent and mindful, checks these thoughts of mind. When mind's elation cometh not to pass, th'enlightened sage Abandons utterly these thoughts of mind, that none remain."

S: This episode represents a quite important development so far as the teaching we have had previously in the Udana is concerned. What do you think that development consists in?

ABC: This is the ... doctrinal (?)

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S: In a way, yes.

ABC: ... of steps, regular steps.

S: Regular steps, ye-es. So far, we have had the enunciation of the ideal in quite general terms, and then some indication of certain qualities to be cultivated and certain qualities to be got rid of. But this is the first time that anything like a systematic path of progress has been mapped out. It is still quite simple and rudimentary, but it is the first time that it has been done, in any detail, in the Udana.

Let us look at it a little more closely. First of all, the episode that gave rise to the teaching - the episode about Meghiya. What do you think the moral of that little incident is?

: That he hadn't reached a sufficiently mature state to be able to go and meditate by himself. He really had to benefit from creative company first.

S: He wasn't ready to go off on his own, and when he insisted, against the Buddha's advice, he suffered; and he was quite surprised. In other words, he didn't realize the extent to which he depended for his positive mental state on his association with the Buddha, and as soon as he parted company with the Buddha, even for a single day, his mind was assailed by all these unskilful thoughts - very much to his surprise.

You also notice that the Buddha doesn't force him to stay with him. He asks three times. Twice the Buddha refuses; the third time, he says, 'What can I say? How can I stop you practising concentration?' Here, too, he is speaking ironically. 'You do whatever you think best' - meaning that Meghiya has to find out by committing his own mistakes, apparently, if he won't take the Buddha's word for it or follow the Buddha's advice.

You see Meghiya's rationalization. The Buddha says, "Well, Meghiya, what can I say when you talk of striving for concentration?" He means, 'Obviously, I have advised you to strive for concentration. You say that that is just what you are going to go away and do. How can I object?' But he knows that it isn't as simple as that for Meghiya - that Meghiya isn't in a position yet to strive for concentration on his own. He merely thinks that he is. The Buddha knows that if he told Meghiya he wasn't ready, he might even be annoyed at the suggestion, so he lets him go off and find out for himself.

We find this very much in our own experience. Sometimes some of our Friends part company with us and go off on their own, away from the Movement and from the Order, before they are really ready, and sometimes they cannot get on very well on their own. That is something that we are experiencing - I won't say all the time, but certainly from time to time.

Meghiya even uses an argument. He is quite convinced he is in the right. He says to the Buddha: 'It's all right for you. You don't have anything left to do. You already are the Buddha. You have gained Enlightenment; you have gained Nirvana. But I haven't. I ought to strive. I ought to practise concentration while I have the opportunity. There's this beautiful, cool mango grove where I can get on with my practice very well.' He is ready with all the arguments. He doesn't really believe that the Buddha knows better.

The mango grove is a very common feature of the Indian scene. Practically every village has its own mango grove, which provides not only fruit [177] in season but also a beautiful cool shade. I have experienced this many a time, and there are quite a few descriptions in my memoirs of mango groves on the outskirts of villages. They are certainly beautiful places in which to take a rest and to sit for a while when it is hot. They really are very, very cool, because the leaves of the mango tree grow densely, very close together, so they provide a thick shade. It is cool there even on the hottest day. Apparently Meghiya had discovered this really beautiful, cool mango grove, and he thought, 'It is too good to waste. This is where I can get on with my concentration.'

It is as if one of our Friends or Order Members discovers a beautiful little cottage tucked away in the country, miles from anywhere, and he doesn't want to waste it; he just has to go there and use it, even though perhaps he isn't yet ready to stay in that way on his own.

Another point you notice is that Meghiya doesn't seem to care much about the Buddha being left on his own without any attendant. That doesn't seem to count very much, though the Buddha says quite specifically: "'Wait a little, Meghiya. I am alone till some other monk arrives.'"

Devaraja: Could there be any possible reference to Meghiya going in the company of another monk to meditate?

S: No. Apparently it was considered proper, in the early days of Buddhism, that the Buddha should always have someone with him, an attendant to do certain things for him and receive visitors. Ananda, of course, was the last and most famous of the attendants.

So what do we learn about Meghiya from this? First of all, he was a bit headstrong. He didn't really know his own mental state very well, and he didn't consider very much the convenience of the Buddha. Also he was rather good at rationalization and thinking up plausible

arguments, so that he could do what he wanted to do, what he thought best. No doubt, he was not a particularly bad monk; he was quite good and quite sincere. After all, he had become a bhikkhu. But he was just a bit misguided.

And, of course, he comes back that evening to the Buddha to tell him what has happened. What does the Buddha say then? Quite appropriately, the first thing the Buddha speaks about is kalyana mittata or kalyana mitrata. The translation 'a lovely intimacy' is not really very good. It is 'spiritual friendship'; that is quite simply what it is. Kalyana means good, positive, noble, spiritual. 'Spiritual friendship' or 'spiritual fellowship' is the best translation. So it is only natural, in the circumstances, that the Buddha should speak about that first. Probably that does come first, for most people; it is the most important thing - to be in contact with other like-minded people who can help you to develop skilful thoughts, skilful(?), simply by your association with them.

Do you think there is any necessary connection between the spiritual fellowship and the practice of virtue? The monk is said to abide 'restrained with the restraint of the obligations' - the reference is to the pratimoksha, the rules of conduct observed by the bhikkhus. Do you think there is any necessary follow-on here?

: I suppose it is the creation of the right society and the right way to live in that society.

S: Right. If you are living in close spiritual fellowship with other like-minded people, obviously you will tend to follow the same way of life, the same lifestyle, even, the same pattern of observance. In this way, you [178] start living rightly and properly. It is not just a matter of observing the same rules that they are observing. It isn't like that at all. You just spontaneously get into the way of doing things as they do; you get into their way of doing things, simply by association with them. You find yourself practising what may appear to other people to be rules, quite naturally.

I must say I have noticed this very much in the East. You can read, for instance, in books about Buddhism - books about the Vinaya - all the rules that the monks are supposed to observe, and some of them seem quite odd. You might get the impression that this is highly artificial - that when you become a bhikkhu you start observing so many rules. But leaving aside those which are actually out of date and which aren't observed anyway, it isn't like that at all. When you become a monk and go to live in a monastery, you are just doing what everybody else does. You don't think in terms of rules, exactly. You almost - I won't say unconsciously, but spontaneously, go along with what other people are doing. If they are all vegetarians, you are a vegetarian. You are not following a rule that you should not eat meat. They are all vegetarians and you are a vegetarian. Vegetarian food is supplied, so that is what you eat. In the same way as regards other things; for instance, there is no rule that you shall chant three times a day. Everybody is chanting three times a day, and you have joined, you belong, so you chant three times a day. It is part of the total lifestyle of the monks of that monastery.

If you try to give somebody else an idea of how the monks are living, and you draw up a list of the things that they are doing and not doing, it looks like a set of rules imposed from the outside. But actually, for those who are following and living in that way, it isn't like that at all.

You could make a summary of your own life in terms of rules, and you could make it look as though you were forcing yourself to obey those rules; you get up at seven in the morning and you put on your trousers; then you have your breakfast, and so on. The monks are just living their life. It is the outsiders who think in terms of rules, not the monks themselves - or, at least, not to the same extent. If they are thinking in terms of rules, it means perhaps that they are not really very much into the way of life.

So, out of your spiritual fellowship with those who also are following the path, you adopt their lifestyle, you live as they live, you do things in the way that they do them. In this way, you find yourself as it were practising the Precepts - functioning in a skilful manner.

What comes next? Talk, discussion - the right sort: positive talk, positive discussion, which produces a good, positive emotional effect. You notice that the Buddha says:

"Then again, Meghiya, as regards talk that is serious and suitable for opening up the heart and conduces to downright revulsion, to dispassion, to ending, to calm, to comprehension to perfect insight, to nibbana" ...

What do you notice about that which is rather striking?

Sagaramati: It sounds a bit like the positive nidanas.

S: It does, yes, exactly! But where does it enter in the series of positive nidanas?

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Several voices: Quite high up.

S: Quite high up; how high up, in fact?

: The Transcendental.

S: The Transcendental. What does that suggest? It suggests that the right sort of talk itself, if it is sufficiently positive, can create those preceding nidanas, almost bypassing meditation.

"Then again, Meghiya, as regards talk that is serious and suitable for opening up the heart"

That is very important. In other words, the right sort of talk can have the same sort of effect on one's emotional state as all those positive nidanas, right up to where the transcendental part of the series begins. Then it says that this positive talk can launch you directly into the Transcendental, like a good discourse, as we find in fact so often happens in the Scriptures; someone hears a discourse by the Buddha, and he is so much stirred up by it and so much moved, he is in such a strong, positive emotional state, that Insight arises immediately on the basis of that. There is no need for meditation in the formal sense of sitting and meditating. He is in an equivalent state simply by virtue of that positive discussion. That is very important.

It means that positive discussion can get you into virtually the same positive mental and emotional state as meditation, and can prepare the way, therefore, for the arising of Insight in much the same way that meditation itself does.

We also get, I think, for the first time in the Udana, that famous triad or three successive steps of sila, samadhi and prajna. Also, the Buddha says, "such talk as this" - the serious talk 'suitable for opening up the heart' - "the monk gets at pleasure, without pain and without stint." There is an abundance of it, within the context of the spiritual fellowship.

Sona: It mentions sila, samadhi and prajna earlier on, in chapter I: 'when things grow plain to the ardent, musing brahmin' ...

S: Ah, yes. They are virtually there, but not in these precise terms.

So you see the sequence. First of all, there's the spiritual fellowship. Then, in consequence of the spiritual fellowship, there is the almost insensible taking on of the way of life of your spiritual friends. Then, within the context of the spiritual fellowship, the spiritual friendship, there is positive talk and discussion of a highly encouraging and inspiring sort, which is in its emotional effect virtually equivalent to meditation and which even paves the way for the arising of Insight.

What comes next?

"Then again, Meghiya, a monk abides resolute in energy, for the abandoning of unprofitable things, for the acquiring of profitable things, he is stout and strong in effort, not laying aside the burden in things profitable."

The profitable things, of course, are the skilful mental states; the unprofitable things are the unskilful mental states. Often, of course, the texts [180] speak in terms of the four great efforts, the fourfold Right Effort. Do you remember what they are?

Devaraja: Preventing, eradicating, maintaining and developing.

S: Right. Preventing the arising of the unarisen unskilful thought; getting rid of the arisen unskilful thought; maintaining the arisen skilful thought; and bringing into existence the unarisen skilful thought. These four are suggested here.

Devaraja: Why specifically 'thought' and not mental state and feeling or does 'thought' cover that?

S: It is citta. It covers it all.

What do you think is the meaning of the phrase 'the burden in things profitable'? How are 'things profitable' a burden? How are skilful mental states a burden?

ABC: You have to make an effort.

S: You have to make an effort; you don't really want to develop them. You may say so, but it's such an effort, sometimes, that what is really profitable for you becomes almost a burden, which is really ridiculous and absurd. You may find the unprofitable things that cause you a great deal of pain and suffering quite easy, but the things that are really good for you, which are going to make you happy, you find quite difficult to do. How ridiculous!

You notice that these five things that conduce to the heart's maturity are not quite in progressive order. Do you see that? You could regard the first three as being in progressive order, but the fourth doesn't seem quite to fall into that sequence. Why do you think that is, or what do you think is happening?

: That's where it's becoming much more of an individual thing.

S: That, too, yes. You're taking as it were more initiative yourself. First of all, you have the spiritual fellowship, and then you take on the lifestyle of those with whom you have spiritual fellowship. Then their positive talk and discussion encourages you and inspires you; you may even have a glimpse of Insight, a glimpse of the Truth. But it will only be a glimpse in that way; you can't go the whole distance just by getting inspired by other people, though it can certainly start you off. You have to take over and assume responsibility yourself, take the initiative yourself and, as it were, traverse that ground again by your own efforts. Therefore, it says, fourthly:

"Then again, Meghiya, a monk abides resolute in energy, for the abandoning of unprofitable things, for the acquiring of profitable things, he is stout and strong in effort, not laying aside the burden in things profitable."

It says (in effect), that though the external factors, in the form of the good friends, are very helpful and very valuable and can even give you, almost without your doing very much, a glimpse of Insight, once you have had that glimpse you have got really to work hard yourself.

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Then, fifthly, Insight:

"Then again, Meghiya, a monk is possessed of insight" ...

that is, Insight into the Truth ...

"endowed with the insight that goes on to discern the rise and fall" ...

that is, the rise and fall of all conditioned things; in other words, their impermanence, the fact that they come into existence and then go out of existence ...

"with the Ariyan penetration which goes on to penetrate the perfect ending of Ill. When the heart's release is immature, Meghiya, this is the fifth thing, and these are the five things that conduce to its maturity."

So one has got a definite virtual sequence here, amounting practically to a systematic path of development. I've often thought in this past - though I've never actually done it - that one could give quite a good little talk on these five things, the five essential factors of the spiritual life. Perhaps someone should do that some time, since I'm unlikely to get around to it.

"Now, Meghiya, this may be looked for by a monk who has a lovely intimacy, a lovely friendship, a lovely comradeship, - that he will become virtuous, will abide restrained by the restraint of the obligations, be perfect in the practice of right behaviour, see danger in trifling faults, undertake and train himself in the ways of training. This, Meghiya, may be looked for

by a monk ... that he will become virtuous ... that he will undertake ... the ways of training, that he will get at pleasure, without pain and without stint, such talk as is serious..."

and, in this way, item by item, all through the five. Then the Buddha goes on further than that.

"Moreover, Meghiya, by the monk who is established in these five conditions. four other things are to be made to grow" ...

He doesn't say exactly at which point or which stage. It seems to me that they are to be made to grow more in connection with the development of energy. These other four things that are to be made to grow correspond to different types of meditation practice. In fact, they are no fewer than four out of the later five basic methods of meditation. What are they?

"The idea of the unlovely is to be made to grow for the abandoning of lust; amity is to be made to grow for the abandoning of malice; mindfulness of inbreathing and outbreathing is to be made to grow for the suppression of discursive thought; the consciousness of impermanence is to be made to grow for the uprooting of the pride of egoism. In him, Meghiya, who is conscious of impermanence the consciousness of what is not the self is established. [182] He who is conscious of what is not the self wins the uprooting of the pride of egoism in this very life, namely, he wins nibbana."

There is a slight difference from the later list of five, but it is virtually the same and covers much the same sort of ground. First of all, those which are exactly the same: 'mindfulness of inbreathing and outbreathing is to be made to grow for the suppression of discursive thought' and 'amity' - that is, metta - 'is to be made to grow for the abandoning of malice'. One practises the metta bhavana to get rid of anger and hatred. Then one practises the asubhabhavana, reflecting on the unpleasant, repulsive side of things in order to get rid of one's natural craving and attachment for those things. In the context of the five basic methods, here reflection on impermanence is used to get rid of attachment, either in the drastic form of the stages of decomposition of a corpse or simply reflection on death or impermanence in general. Here it says:

"the consciousness of impermanence is to be made to grow for the uprooting of the pride of egoism."

But in the list of the five basic methods, one reflects upon the six elements in order to get rid of conceit or egotism. And, of course, the fifth one is reflecting on the chain of the nidanas, to get rid of ignorance. But there is the same type of pattern. There are certain unskillful mental states and attitudes, the medicine or antidote for which is one or other of the basic meditation methods. So one sees this sort of pattern or list quite early on.

Is there any particular query about these four or five methods?

: At what point do you think Order Members are generally ready to practise the other basic methods?

S: You are really asking in what the readiness consists. First of all, of course, they should be quite well versed in the two basic ones. Also it depends upon particular temperament. If craving is particularly strong, perhaps they should then take up asubhabhavana, or at least one

or other form of the meditation on impermanence. But inasmuch as all these things are present in everybody, sooner or later they should be ready to take up all four or five basic practices; but not in a hurry. They should consolidate the first two first - mindfulness and metta. It is difficult to generalize; one has to deal with each person individually. It is also a question of time.

One could say that the six-element practice is a form of impermanence meditation, because the respective elements are only borrowed for a certain length of time, so one reflects upon that fact - that, sooner or later, one is going to have to give them back.

Sona: I must say that when I've done that practice occasionally, I've found myself actually contemplating the decomposition of the corpse - of how these elements go back into ...

S: Yes, right; they certainly are connected.

Sona: I couldn't really see very much distinction.

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S: Yes, one practice does shade off into the other. In the case of the six-element practice, you are as it were seeing the whole process objectively as an observer or spectator, even though it's you yourself, your own physical body, that is involved. But in the cultivation of the asubhabhavana, you are cultivating more an emotional attitude of disgust or even revulsion to counteract your normal feeling of craving, attachment and attraction. What about the verse?

'Thoughts trite and subtle, taking shape, cause mind to be elated. Man, ignorant of these, with whirling brain, strays to and fro; But knowing them, ardent and mindful, checks these thoughts of mind. When mind's elation cometh not to pass, th'enlightened sage Abandons utterly these thoughts of mind, that none remain.'

Elation - being elated; what do you think is meant by that? It's obviously considered a very unskilful state.

Subhuti: Carried away.

S: Yes, being carried away. When do you usually get carried away in this sort of way?

Devaraja: Gripped by craving - possessed by craving, hatred, or - S: No, 'elated'; you don't usually say 'elated by hatred'.

: By an idea, a fancy or ...

S: I think what is referred to more is the state of complete unmindfulness that overcomes one when one is possessed by an extremely pleasant experience. It's a sort of intoxication. Sometimes, in fact, the word 'intoxication' is used in such a context. When things are going very well and you feel very pleased with yourself and very happy, you start becoming unmindful. This is elation. It's a quite dangerous state.

There's a story about a Zen master who was going to test a disciple. He asked the disciple to climb to the top of a tree - it was quite a dangerous climb - and then climb down again. There

were very few branches and it was a very old tree, and he could easily have made a false step, slipped and fallen, and broken an arm or a leg. The master watched the disciple climb to the top and then climb down. When he was quite near the bottom, the master called out 'Be careful!', and then the disciple came down. So afterwards the master was asked, 'Why didn't you call out "Be careful!" when he was at the top? Why did you call out "Be careful!" when he was nearly at the bottom?' The master said, 'That was the most dangerous stage. He would have started thinking that he was safe, that he didn't have to be careful any longer, that he was nearly there. So I called out "Be careful!"' It is a little like that. When things are going well, we tend to be so pleased that we start becoming forgetful and unmindful. It is when we are successful that we should be particularly careful, because we sometimes become intoxicated with pleasure and self-satisfaction, and in this way very unmindful, and that is very dangerous. It is that sort of state that this word 'elation' refers to.

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Devaraja: Like after a really good meditation.

S: Yes!

Sona: I sometimes notice it when I am typing, and I think, 'I haven't made a mistake yet!', (Laughter) and as soon as I think that, I make a mistake.

S: It is also a sort of over-confidence, a false confidence, due to which you make mistakes.

Sagaramati: Is that related in any way to 'the heart's release is immature'?

S: Is what related?

Sagaramati: In the prose: 'Cause mind to be elated'. Is that related to when 'the heart's release is immature'?

S: Presumably, yes. It's only the immature mind which could become elated in that way. This is why it is good to have someone to take you down a peg or two when you get into this sort of state.

Anything general about this whole episode? It is quite an important one.

ABC: This (episode) seems to be very deep.

S: Mm. You also get the idea of a particular method of meditation as a specific remedy for specific disease, as it were; a specific unskilful state. In other words, that the Dharma isn't an end in itself; it's a means to an end.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Kusinara, at the Bend, in the sal-grove of the Mallas. On that occasion a great number of monks were living in forest huts not far from the Exalted One, and they were frivolous, empty-headed, busybodies, of harsh speech, loose in talk, lacking concentration, unsteady, not composed, of flighty mind, with senses uncontrolled. Now the Exalted One saw those monks who were ... of such a nature, living not far from him, and seeing the meaning of it at that time he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Having his mind unguarded, ruined by view perverse, O'erwhelmed by sloth-and-torpor, to Mara's power one goes. So let the monk of guarded mind, with right aim ranging, Deferring to right view, knowing the rise and fall, Deferring sloth-and-torpor, all ill-bourns abandon.'

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S: This is the first time, by the way, that Kusinara is mentioned, which is where the Buddha eventually passed away. The Mallas were a republican tribe, many members of which were followers of the Buddha, and, of course, he did pass away in their territory.

'View perverse' is, presumably, micchaditthi; 'right view' is presumably sammaditthi. The verse here emphasizes the importance of right view, sammaditthi. It speaks of the monk as being 'ruined' by micchaditthi. It is quite a strong expression.

I think this is the first time this particular topic has been introduced in the Udana - the importance of getting rid of false view or perverse view and cultivating right view or perfect view. In the course of the last year or so, I think, there has been quite a bit of talk within the movement about false views. They have become, I won't say more prominent than before, but they are being detected, tracked down, more than before; and wrong attitudes and even wrong behaviour are being traced more and more to certain wrong views which represent a sort of crystallization of basic wrong attitudes - not just on the part of the individual himself or herself, but of a large number of people, perhaps even the whole of society - the whole of our culture. What are the latest favourites - does anybody know? What are the latest ones to have been nailed?

Devaraja: The private and public lives.

S: The private and public lives! Yes, I heard this mentioned the other weekend. Yes! What about this micchaditthi - or is it a micchaditthi? We mustn't make up our minds too quickly. What is said on this topic?

Devaraja: It is definitely a micchaditthi, but it's fast dropping away.

S: Oh, tell me more.

Devaraja: Well, it's just the idea that an Order Member has a part of his life that he can keep exclusively to himself and that is not open for examination by other Order Members.

S: Why is it a micchaditthi?

Devaraja: Well, because it means that the person is not then entirely an Upasaka - or entirely open, for a start, with fellow Order Members. And it means that only part of their life is then lived as an Upasaka. Presumably it then becomes like a job that you do between certain hours.

S: So you think that complete openness is an essential part of the whole thing?

Devaraja: Yes.

S: Has this particular micchaditthi been raised much lately - that you are entitled to your private life, as it were?

: Yes, it has been raised.

S: Mm. And where did this distinction start, do you think, between public and private life?

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Sona: When I was transcribing the seminar on 'The Stability of Discipleship', it was mentioned there that, in a sense, an Order Member doesn't have a private life; but I think, in some ways, the micchaditthi has arisen from this, (S. chuckles.) and I think that maybe what you meant there was whatever action you perform has an effect on the Order, or on everyone else. I get the feeling that people are taking it to mean that they have got the right to pry into everything you're doing. In some ways, it may perhaps be more skilful for them not to; you may have a good reason for not allowing them to do so at that moment.

: Yes, but the reason is not based on the idea that you're entitled to a private life - that there is a part of your life that is not - Where it is a mistake is because people assume that there is a sort of sacrosanct part of their lives (which is) private because that's the way it is; it almost becomes an absolute verity, your privacy ...

S: Yes, an absolute value.

: Yes; which it's not. On the other hand, it may well be that there is a sort of ...

S: Inquisitorial attitude on the part of some people?

: Yeah, sure! Or that there may be a kind of solitary aspect to one's life, or that one needs privacy at times. That's fair enough. But that's for your spiritual growth.

S: In other words, you shouldn't invoke the principle of privacy to conceal something that you would be ashamed of other Order Members knowing ...

: Exactly.

S: - and, therefore, which you don't want to expose for examination.

I was wondering how, within the context of English social life and culture, this whole conception of your private life arose. I suspect - though this is a bit of guesswork, off the cuff - that it arose, or was consolidated, during the Victorian period, when there were many things that you just could not do publicly, or not confess or admit to doing, so you had to do them privately, which meant secretly. Therefore, your private life became very important, because that was your real life. There is much the same thing, apparently, in the Soviet Union, so I was told by Vajrabodhi. He said that many people live much of their life as it were underground. For instance, they pass from hand to hand cyclostyled books which are banned by the authorities, and they get together and exchange these and talk about them. There is a lot of activity of that kind. You could say that that is their private life. It is not the life which is exposed to the examination of the state; the state would disapprove of it.

So in what situation does the concept of a private life arise? This is what I'm getting at.

: Basically, where people are ashamed of what they do in private.

S: Well, perhaps so, but it can also be when the so-called public life is oppressive. In those circumstances, you are quite entitled to have [187] a private life. The private life is you, in fact, not the public life. But what is wrong is a situation arising in which there has to be that split. (Voices agreeing) So it isn't a question of being entitled to your private life or not; having to make the distinction at all is undesirable.

You didn't find that, for instance, in ancient Greece. Everybody knew what everybody else was doing; everything was done openly and publicly. Private life was public life, public life was private life. The Greeks probably wouldn't have understood such a distinction. But the Victorians certainly did.

So the concept of a private life can arise when the society to which you belong, or have to belong, doesn't permit you to be truly human, or when you yourself are in fact genuinely ashamed of certain things, and you don't wish them to be known. Then you create a private life in self-defence. Neither situation is very happy, though in the one case it is less your fault than it is in the other. But one should certainly work for the abolition of this dividing line between the private life and the public life; for Order Members, there should be no question of public life and private life so far as other Members of the Order are concerned. In other words, there shouldn't be anything that you feel that you have to hide from other Order Members, and therefore rationalize in the form of 'They're not entitled to know; I've a right to my private life.' On the other hand, this does not mean that an inquisitorial, nosy-parker attitude on the part of Order Members is at all justified, and that you can't even call your soul your own, as it were, because it belongs to the Order - not that in the least.

Devaraja: Related to that is a micchaditthi you have cut through ... in an article talking about terminology. That was the idea of 'my role as an Upasaka'!

S: Oh yes, terrible, isn't it? It may be just a slip of the tongue, to use that language, but that should be at once nipped in the bud.

Devaraja: There are so many attitudes you can regard as slips of the tongue.

S: Right! It's much the same when I hear some of our female Friends talking about 'their role as women'. It's not a role; you are a woman! (Laughter.) We shall hear people talking about their role as men next! (Voices giggling.) But this is really a micchaditthi - talking in terms of a role about something which you actually are. Another example I gave was that you have children, say, and you talk about your role as a father. There is no question of your having a role as a father; you are a father, and you must behave accordingly and be a father.

Devaraja: Would it be more correct, or possible, to speak in terms of 'my function as a father', or is that again ...

S: 'My functioning' would be better - as a verb. 'Being a father'; or 'when I am fulfilling my position as a father', even, would be better. 'Role' suggests it's just a big act, something that you are pretending to do, almost, that isn't really you. But it is you! And, if you speak of roles in this way, it suggests a sort of alienation.

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ABC: A lot of the idea of roles seems to arise out of the idea of the private life; because then,

within certain public areas, you have to have a role to, as it were, conceal your private life.

S: Right, yes. So if you have a 'role' as an Upasaka, literally, it means that you're concealing the fact that actually you're not an Upasaka. It becomes a big pretence, a big act. This really has to be watched. Especially if you start thinking, 'There's a certain area of time, where I don't have to be an Upasaka; I'm off duty. I can take off my kesa and forget all about it. I just play the role, and play it very nicely, correctly and beautifully, just for a certain time. - '

Sagaramati: (inaudible, but raises much laughter.)

S: Also, of course, it means not having a false idea of what an Upasaka is. It means including every part of yourself in the concept of being an Upasaka. Not that you are an Upasaka with the best part of yourself; then, of course, you go off duty and, not the worst, perhaps, but one of your less worthy selves, takes over. So it really means that, whatever you do, whether relatively skilful or relatively unskilful, you should be doing with the whole of yourself, and that nothing should be a role.

This whole concept of 'role' is one of the biggest of micchaditthis. It has arisen especially in connection with sexual 'roles', where it seems really ridiculous.

Sona: It seems to be talking in psychological terms.

S: Yes: where a woman says, 'I don't like this feminine role', when she really means, 'I don't like doing washing up'. Fair enough, if you don't like doing washing up, say you don't like doing washing up; but don't speak in terms of not liking the feminine role.

: I don't really like the word 'function', either.

S: Well, it (should be) 'being'; it's being one of the things that you are. But 'role' suggests that you are not really what you purport to be, that you're not really into what you're supposed to be doing; that you're somewhat alienated from it. This is why it's so dangerous. And it is particularly dangerous to describe as 'roles' what are in fact your genuine functionings - that is the only word I can use - you yourself being yourself in a certain situation. To speak of that as a role which you are playing is really quite incorrect and quite disastrous. It almost conditions you into being alienated from what you are doing.

So that's two related micchaditthis: the private life and the role. Have there been any others recently? (Silence.) These two have been firmly put in their places, I gather? (Voices: Mm.)

Sagaramati: With the last one ... there was a question of Dharmapala making up some new communication game. I don't feel very sure about this idea of taking it a step away from real life, and having people play roles, as it were to discover ...

S: I don't quite understand this. Can you be more explicit?

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Sagaramati: He complained that communication in the Order was bad, and suggested making up some exercises.

S: You mean communication exercises?

Sagaramati: Yes, but they were more like - they weren't quite straightforwardly sitting down, looking at someone. They seemed to involve playing what I would call roles.

S: Well, I did hear - I don't know whether it was the same thing - that someone had suggested that Order Members should practise communication exercises among themselves, and I sat upon this rather heavily. I said that Order Members ought to apply these things directly in their dealings with one another, not to segregate the communication to a set of exercises. It's all right for beginners or people who are completely new to the Movement, their first or second time on retreat, when they are a bit blocked and their energy is not flowing freely. Sure; the communication exercises can really help. I saw this on the last retreat we had in Helsinki. But Order Members ought not to have to resort to these things in the form of exercises. They should have gone far beyond that. If there's any blockage of communication, they should sort it out directly with the person or persons concerned.

In that situation, to do communication exercises is an evasion of the actual confrontation and communication - (not) to speak of doing any new communication exercises - not even the old ones! You should have learned that lesson, and now apply it. For why do you do the exercises? Not as a little treat for yourself, a little self-indulgence, just to sit and look at somebody, but so that you can be more truly communicative in all the ordinary relationships of life, with the people that you meet in ordinary circumstances.

So, if you think of doing communication exercises with other Order Members, it is a shocking confession of failure. It is almost a consolidation of the failure. I would say, no, it is better to go and talk to that person directly, whether it is something positive or something negative, or whatever; sort it out directly, without any medium of exercises. It would be better to have a good row and clear the air, if that is necessary - as it might be occasionally. It is really absurd, if you think about it.

Sagaramati: I think that's what we were trying to avoid, by having (the exercises) - a good row.

S: Ha! But what one is trying to avoid in such situations is not necessarily even something negative. It can be something positive. But the evasiveness is there, I feel and, therefore, not to be encouraged.

This reminds me - it's a bit parallel - of a comment made by the ancient Egyptians upon the Greeks, according to Herodotus. The Egyptians strongly disapproved of the Greek institution of the gymnasium. According to them, it showed that the Greeks were very unbalanced and unhealthy people. They said, 'Your normal way of life should keep you healthy and fit and in good physical trim. If you have to resort to a separate building and separate practices and separate exercises for this, it shows that your whole way of life is wrong and out of balance.' (Voices agreeing.)

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ABC: I feel that a bit with yoga. The reason why we have to do yoga is that our lifestyle is so bad that we have to supplement it.

S: Right. In India, you look at some of the village people, especially the women, who work in the fields and carry water from the well every day in great pots on their heads; they have a magnificent carriage. They hold themselves really well; they go absolutely upright and are very dignified and even muscularly developed. They don't do exercises, they just do their daily work.

Sona: Sue (surname inaudible) always reminds me of that. She's got a very loose spine; she's very strong, in fact. In yoga, (we are) always telling people to move their sacrum; she doesn't do yoga but she moves her sacrum better than anyone!

: What's a sacrum?

S: That's not what they call the funny bone, is it? That's the base of the elbow, isn't it?
(Laughter.)

But it's the same, actually, about meditation practices and meditation exercises. Why do you need to sit for meditation and practise meditation exercises? It's absurd - (it's) because you're in an unskilful, unhealthy state of mind, which you shouldn't be. Your way of life should naturally conduce to a meditative mood. You shouldn't have to sit down and do exercises to get into that mood.

Devaraja: But then we could work that all the way back to the beginning, because we could say that, given that the situation is unhealthy, we do not need meditation exercises; given that our lives are unhealthy, we do need gymnasia and yoga. Perhaps, even, given that our communication is unhealthy ...

S: Yes, but what you should beware of doing is to divide your whole life into two watertight compartments: the ordinary life and the exercises. The exercises must gradually affect the whole of the rest of the life; not that you should accept, in your ordinary, everyday contacts, that you cannot communicate, and confine your communication to the exercises. Not that. Not accept that, in ordinary, everyday circumstances, you are never going to be in a positive mood and that you can only get that through your meditation practice. You should not accept that. And so on.

Look how unhealthy our life is. We need separate entertainment, whereas in the past your life itself was your entertainment. Your work was your play, your play was your work. This whole thing of work and leisure that's terribly unhealthy. 'My own time; the firm's time' - this is very unhealthy.

ABC: This is all the split of energies, isn't it?

S: Yes, it is. Also, this relates to private life and public life. (Voices assenting.)

So the biggest micchaditthi of all, in a way, seems to be that you can split up your life in this way. You get it even with psychotherapy. You undergo psychotherapy so that you can go on living in the old, unhealthy way. Or you go to the doctor when you get sick, and he patches you up [191] so you can go and do all the things again which made you sick in the first place. This is one reason why we want to alter society, to some extent at least - so that our communication exercises percolate through into our normal communication, our meditation

percolates through into our normal state of mind, our right livelihood percolates through into the whole socio-economic set-up and changes it, and so on.

We have to be very careful not to take refuge in an exercise or its equivalent instead of trying to change our total situation, because that means a confession of defeat, and sooner or later you will not be able to keep that little separate reserve anyway.

: The attitude of defeat would even percolate through into that (area).

S: Yes, and that little area will get smaller and smaller, perhaps. For instance, take communication: if you are non-communicating most of the time with other people, sooner or later you won't be able to do the communication exercises. They will become completely stereotyped and mechanical. You will just go through the motions and kid yourself that you're doing them, but you won't be. It is like the scientologist who came to one of our retreats and said he knew all about communication exercises - he'd done them dozens of times and he had taught them. So we sat him down in front of one of our ordinary members to do the communication exercises, and I was watching him. He was doing them just as a mechanical routine, with no feeling whatever. But the person sitting opposite him wasn't; she insisted on doing them properly, with the result that, after the second little session, he just left; he couldn't stand it any more. He left the retreat. He was operating the communication exercises mechanically. He had learned something of that sort with scientology, and thought he knew all about it, but he was just doing it quite mechanically. He was not in communication at all. So this really has to be watched.

Devaraja: I suppose this has its application to meditation techniques as well ... in that, when it gets like that, it means there's a loss of sort of reverence, faith - I don't know - almost a loss of humility. I mean there's not any humility ...

S: Or maybe it's a bit like when you're just keeping your metta for the mettabhavana session and you don't have any outside that!

There is the same danger in sensitivity groups and so on - that they do, within these sensitivity groups, the things that they ought to be doing in their ordinary lives, but they corral it there and only have it there, and the whole of the rest of their social life is left untouched and unchanged. I think this is a quite dangerous development. It's all right if you use that area as a training ground, and then come back to ordinary life and try to change it. But I don't think that happens very often. Usually, I think you escape for a weekend and have a grand time, and that helps to compensate for the sort of time that you usually have to have. It helps you carry on in the bad old way, but you don't break down that dividing wall.

It's the same thing with much of conventional religion. People go to church to be helped to put up with the miserable way in which they are living. The church is all beautiful, decorated and attractive, so it helps you to reconcile yourself to your ordinary lot. There has been [192] a lot of this in the past in Europe.

Devaraja: The point I was trying to make was that, in the meditation practice, the thing that prevented it degenerating into a gradually rusting technique that would seize up is having some contact with, and strong feeling for, the religious ideal. In the communication exercises, perhaps that equivalent is the ideal of human communication, and when that ideal is not

present, it just becomes a technique to achieve some sort of personal release, and gradually that gets rustier and rustier and seizes up.

S: Originally, we were talking about communication exercises within the Order. But if, within the Order, you need exercises even in conjunction with an appreciation of the ideal of human communication, I think you have reached a sorry pass. It's an evasion so far as the Order is concerned. Outside, sure; they remain very necessary and helpful. But one Order Member ought to be able to go up to another and just communicate. If they can't, there's something wrong and it should be tackled directly, not be sidetracked into communication exercises.

Sona: On the Order retreat, if I remember rightly, someone thought that maybe doing communication exercises could actually deepen one's communication - raise one to another level. Do you feel that there's any value in that?

S: I still think it's evasion.

Devaraja: On the last Order retreat I personally took one session of communication exercises, and I know that Lokamitra benefited immensely from it, because he was going through a very difficult patch at the time, and I know he was a lot happier coming out of them.

S: If that is so, it means that Order Members may be on a lower level than they should be.

Devaraja: I don't think it was - for him at that point, he was so down, he was just locking himself away in his room, and he literally had to be hauled out and made to sit down and ...

S: Well, probably if you had said, 'Come on, let's have a chat,' it would have worked in the same way.

Devaraja: True, yes.

Sagaramati: But even normally, when the communication exercises are taken at the centre - I thought originally the idea was that it was some high level of communication; that one could do them all one's life and never achieve that level of communication. It's almost like there's some very high ideal that one is meant to achieve while doing the exercises.

S: I certainly think that this is possible, but it is certainly (also) possible in the context of normal social communication. One must beware of thinking that true communication is tied up with doing specific exercises, which it isn't. True communication is true communication; it is something that normally and naturally happens between people who are [193] sufficiently aware and sensitive. But when you get blocked and rusty, you just resort to exercises which help you out of that, and once you've removed your blockages you go back to the more normal type of communication - that is, communication within actual existing situations, not artificial situations.

I think the communication exercises are very useful, but they shouldn't be used indiscriminately or over-valued, or be allowed to replace normal channels of communication. It is the normal channels of communication that must be deepened, and we use the exercises to help that. It is not that the exercises make possible a higher level of communication - a level which is not possible in ordinary situations.

Of course, real communication is possible only with people whom you know really well. In the context of the exercises, you can quickly get to know someone quite well, you can have a quite intense experience. But very often it collapses afterwards and people don't follow it up, and your relationship with the person with whom you had that good communication can go back to exactly where it was: nowhere. Or you can start misusing the benefits of the communication. We have known several cases where successful communications have turned into little sexual affairs, with sometimes unfortunate results. That is misuse of the communication. Sometimes people play all sorts of little tricks and games in this connection, which is not very good.

You must also beware of using the communication exercises as a means of livening up the party when it gets a bit dull. This is also done sometimes.

We haven't really finished with the verse, have we? Sloth-and-torpor is twice mentioned - tinamittas. Is there anything to say about that? (Silence) You notice that being 'O'erwhelmed by sloth-and-torpor' comes immediately after 'ruined by view perverse', and 'O'ercoming sloth-and-torpor' comes immediately after 'Deferring to right view, knowing the rise and fall'. Do you think there is any necessary or natural connection in either of those cases?

Subhuti: Often micchaditthis are produced in order to paralyse yourself, so that you can't move anywhere, to justify a stagnant position.

S: Yes. Mm. Can you give an example of that being done? Perhaps the private life is a good enough example.

Subhuti: Yes, I think that all those we have just mentioned (are). Even the one about communication exercises.

S: Right, yes. But what is sloth-and-torpor? How does it come about? What experience of it do people have? How does one cope with it or grapple with it?

Subhuti: It's usually lack of confidence, I think.

Sagaramati: (It's) lack of energy - your energy is draining away somewhere else.

Subhuti: It's draining away because it often seems you don't feel confident to express it or -

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ABC: I find it in meditation, if I don't keep going with it when the going gets tough, or if I give in to doubts. That, I find, produces sloth-and-torpor.

S: I think sometimes sloth-and-torpor is produced by conflict, if your energies are cancelling each other out. There was, no doubt, quite a bit of sloth-and-torpor around the centre in the past - the Archway centre especially, even before it was Archway. But that seems to be rapidly coming to an end, so what is your diagnosis? What do you think is happening or has happened? What has broken up the sloth-and-torpor - at least, most of it?

: I think people are getting an idea of what Buddhism is.

Sona: ... (inaudible)

ABC: Bethnal Green.

S: Something to look forward to and work for. You can't just get your energy out; you have to get your energy out for something, or for the sake of something. There has to be a definite ideal or project, which you understand and accept and are happy and enthusiastic about. You can't merely get your energy out because in the abstract you think it would be a good thing to do. You have to get it out in a concrete situation for a concrete reason, and be able to believe in that. G.K. Chesterton wrote something about going to heaven by way of Charing Cross.* [195] Maybe we should write something about going to Nirvana by way of Bethnal Green.

*["...Jacob's ladder / Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross." (Francis Thompson)
"Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green." (G. K. Chesterton) - note added by transcriber]

Sagaramati: It seems to be the opposite of the previous udana which mentioned 'whirling brain'. The energy here is about ... (inaudible)

S: That is the hindrance of distraction.

Sona: In the prose it says 'at the Bend'. What is that, do you know?

S: I assume it means the bend in the road.

Sona: I was just wondering if there was a special sign for it, 'The Bend'.

: It's just a bend in the road.

Devaraja: There still is a bend in the road, where the sal trees are.

S: Yes, it's the sal trees, that's right. Things don't change much in India, do they? Yes, it must be the bend in the road, I think - or a bend in the river.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was going his rounds among the Kosalan together with a great number of monks. Then the Exalted One, stepping off the highroad, went to the root of a certain tree and sat down on a seat made ready.

Then a certain cowherd came up to the Exalted One, saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated the Exalted One instructed, stirred, fired and gladdened that cowherd with talk in accordance with dhamma. And that cowherd, being thus instructed, stirred, fired and gladdened by the Exalted One's talk, said this to him: 'Sir, let the Exalted One accept of me this day's meal together with the order of monks.' And the Exalted One accepted by silence. Thereupon that cowherd, seeing the Exalted One's consent, rose up, saluted the Exalted One with the right side and went away.

Then when the night was gone that cowherd made ready in his own home a good store of thick milk-rice and fresh ghee, and announced the time to the Exalted One, saying, 'Sir, the rice is cooked.'

So the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, went along with the order of monks to that cowherd's home and on reaching it sat down on a seat made ready. Then that cowherd with his own hands satisfied and fed to the full the order of monks, headed by the Exalted One, with thick milk-rice and fresh ghee. And that cowherd (seeing that) the Exalted One had eaten his fill and had washed both hand and bowl, taking a low seat sat down at one side. As he thus sat the Exalted One instructed, stirred, fired and gladdened him with talk in accordance with dhamma. Then he rose up and went away.

Now not long after the Exalted One was gone a certain man slew that cowherd on the village boundary. And a great number of monks ... came to the Exalted One ... and said: 'Sir, they say that the cowherd by whom the order of monks, headed by the Exalted One, was this very day satisfied and fully fed, with his own hands ... has been slain by some man on the village boundary.'

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Whatever the ill that a foe Doth a foe, or the hate to him that he hates, Greater by far will he find The ill that is done by an ill-trained mind."

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S: What do you think the moral of this little episode is? Or is there a moral? You notice that the cowherd was very much enthused by the Buddha's talk, in fact twice, but there is no question of any actual Insight arising, as often is the case in other episodes, when the Buddha instructs in this way. It is as though positive emotional states are created in the cowherd's mind as a result of the Buddha's discourse, but nothing more than that. But even that is good, as far as it goes. It is as though the Buddha is saying in the verse, 'It doesn't really matter what this cowherd's enemy has done to him in killing him. If his own mind had been in an unskilful state, that would have done him even greater harm.' Your own unskilful mind can do you more harm than any external foe.

Devaraja: Perhaps to some extent the cowherd's unskilful state of mind led him into the situation where that conflict arose.

S: Possibly, though we are not actually told that. It is as though the Buddha says that you should not think, just because you escape being killed by somebody, that therefore all is well with you. You may be doing much more harm than that to yourself by your own unskilful mental states. Your own unskilful mental states are really killing you, in a far heavier sense. All is not well simply because you remain alive. So, in a way, not much harm befell the cowherd, even though he was killed, provided his mind was in a highly skilled positive state consequent upon hearing the Buddha's discourse. If he remained in that state and was killed in that state, it wouldn't have mattered.

You yourself are your own worst enemy when you get into an unskilful mental state. The harm that others do to you is very little by comparison. It is very rarely that other people kill you, abuse you or beat you. This doesn't happen very often. But you are doing harm to your own self by your own unskilful thoughts practically every day, practically all the time. You think one so terrible, but you don't think the other so terrible - which is rather anomalous.

You say, as it were, 'Look at the harm he has done me.' But what about all the harm you are doing yourself all the time?

Sona: It is very important.

S: I think there is a misprint here. It should be 'the hater', not just 'the hate'.

'Whatever the ill that a foe Doth a foe, or the hater to him that he hates, Greater by far will he find The ill that is done by an ill-trained mind.'

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground.

On that occasion the venerable Sariputta and Moggallana the Great were staying at Pigeons' Grotto, and the venerable Sariputta on a moonlight night, having just had his head shaved, was sitting in the open air, and had won access to a certain stage of concentration.

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Just then two yakkhas, who were friends, were travelling from north to south on some business or other. And they saw the venerable Sariputta thus sitting."

S: They were flying through the air overhead, of course.

"At the sight of him one yakkha said to the other, 'It occurs to me to give this recluse a blow on the head.'"

S: The commentary says that he saw his bald pate shining in the moonlight.

"At these, words the other yakkha replied, 'Hold, friend! Have nothing to do with the recluse! Friend, that recluse is a mighty man, of great power and majesty.'

Then a second time that yakkha repeated his words, and again his friend restrained him. So also a third time. Then that yakkha, disregarding the other's advice, gave the venerable Sariputta a blow on the head. So mighty was the blow that one might have felled an elephant seven to eight cubits high or cleft a mountain peak therewith. Instantly that yakkha, screaming 'I burn! I burn!' fell into the great hell.

Now the venerable Moggallana the Great with clairvoyant sight, purified and more than human, beheld the blow on the head of the venerable Sariputta given by that yakkha. At the sight he approached the venerable Sariputta, and on coming to him asked, 'My good sir! I hope you are bearing up! I hope you have support! I hope you are not in pain!'

'Yes, Moggallana, my good sir, I am bearing up! Yes, my good sir, I have support, but I do feel a trifling pain in my head.'

'It is marvellous, Sariputta, my good sir! It is indeed a wonder, - the great power and majesty of the venerable Sariputta! Why, Sariputta, my good sir, just now a certain yakkha gave you a blow on the head; so mighty was the blow that one might have felled an elephant ... or cleft a mountain peak therewith. And yet the venerable Sariputta says, "I am bearing up,

Moggallana, good sir. I have support ... yet I do feel a trifling pain in the head."

'But it is wonderful! It is marvellous, Moggallana, my good sir, - the great power and majesty of the venerable Moggallana, that he should behold a yakkha at all. Why, as for me, I can't see even a mudsprite here.'

Now the Exalted One with clairaudient ear, purified and more than human, heard those two great sages talking in this manner, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Whose heart stands like a rock and swayeth not, Void of all lust for things that lust beget, -
To heart thus trained whence shall come aught of ill?"

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S: This episode connects a little with the previous one, especially with its udana, inasmuch as it shows that it is much easier to hurt yourself than to hurt others. In trying to be an enemy to others you are a much worse enemy to yourself.

: Did this shaving of heads happen very early in the Buddha's life?

S: It is very difficult to say. The Buddha himself is never represented, in art or anywhere else, as shaven-headed, though the disciples usually are. That might be a bit significant, suggesting that it was not a very early practice and that therefore they could dare to alter the monks when representing them, but not the Buddha himself. It was too well established that the Buddha's head was covered with small curls. That is how he is usually represented.

: But Sariputta - ?

S: Sariputta definitely had shaved his head here.

Sagaramati: Isn't there an episode in the Buddha's life where he actually cuts off his hair?

S: Yes, when he leaves home and ... or he cuts off hair and beard. But we are not told that he shaves it close. He cuts it with his sword, which just suggests that he cuts off his long locks, crops himself, rather than shaves the head.

Sariputta and Moggallana, by the way, were very good friends from an early age, and they entered the Sangha together. But they were of very different temperaments. Sariputta was famous for his wisdom and power of exposition, but he had no psychic gifts at all; that is why he does not even see the yakkha, he doesn't know what is happening. But Moggallana had very great psychic gifts and could always see what was going on on other planes and other worlds, and what other beings were doing. But that is just a psychic gift; it has little to do with real spiritual development, progress or attainment.

Subhuti: What is important is that they were rejoicing in each other's merits.

S: Yes, that is very striking; yes. They appreciate each other's great qualities, even though they are very different qualities; whereas, only too often, people depreciate qualities which they do not themselves possess, and appreciate only their own qualities.

In the last line of the verse, the Buddha suggests that the real harm can come only from yourself. If your own mind is right, no real ill can come from outside. You may have to suffer, of course, bear pain and all that sort of thing, but really things are all right, because your own mind is all right; it is in a skilful state.

This, of course, is the teaching of Epictetus, that harm cannot really befall the wise man. Nothing really bad can happen to him because his own mind is under firm control. So there is no such thing as misfortune for the sage.

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"Thus have I heard : On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Kosambi in Ghosita Park. Now on that occasion the Exalted One was worried by monks and nuns, lay-followers, both men and women, by rajahs and royal ministers, by sectarians and their followers, and lived in discomfort, not at ease. Then the Exalted One thought: Here am I living worried by monks and nuns ... by sectarians and their followers. I live in discomfort, not at ease. Suppose I were to live remote from the crowd alone.

So the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Kosambi to quest for alms-food; and having done his rounds for alms-food in Kosambi, after returning and eating his meal, he himself set his bed and lodging in order, and taking bowl and robe, without informing his attendant or giving notice to the order of monks, alone and unattended, started on his rounds for Parileyya village, and later on, while on his rounds, reached that place. There the Exalted One took up his dwelling in Guarded Forest Glade, at the foot of a lovely sal tree.

Now a certain bull-elephant was living worried by elephants and she-elephants, by calf-elephants and sucklings, and had to feed on grass already cropped by them. They ate the bundles of branches as he broke them off. He had to drink muddied water, and when he crossed over by the ford the she-elephants went pushing against his body. So he lived in discomfort, not at ease. So this bull-elephant thought: Here am I living worried by elephants and she-elephants, by calf-elephants and sucklings. I have to feed on grass already cropped. They eat the bundles of branches as I break them off. I have to drink muddied water, and when I cross over by the ford the she-elephants go pushing against my body. Thus I live in discomfort, not at ease. Suppose now I were to live remote from the crowd alone.

Accordingly that bull-elephant left the herd and started for Parileyya village and Guarded Forest Glade and the foot of the lovely sal tree where was the Exalted One. On reaching that place he kept the spot where the Exalted One was staying free from grass, and with his trunk brought water for the use of the Exalted One.

Thus the Exalted One lived in seclusion and solitude, and there arose in him this thought: Formerly I dwelt worried by monks and nuns ... I lived in discomfort, not at ease. But now here am I dwelling unworried by monks and nuns ... by sectarians and their followers. Unworried, I dwell in comfort and at ease. Likewise that bull-elephant thought: Formerly I dwelt worried by elephants... Now I dwell unworried, in comfort and at ease.

And the Exalted One, observing his own seclusion and knowing with his mind the thought of that bull-elephant, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

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Herein agreeth mind with mind, of sage And elephant whose tusks are like a plough pole,
Since both alike love forest solitude."

S: (chuckling) So we can see that history is progressing. By this time, Buddhism has become very popular indeed, and the Buddha has become very popular indeed. There is apparently a big new centre at Kosambi in Ghosita Park, and people are arriving there all the time wanting to see the Buddha - not only monks and nuns, upasakas and upasikas, but kings and royal ministers, sectarian teachers and their followers; so that the Buddha never has any time to himself and is never able to be at peace and at ease. So he decides to get away from it all without telling anybody anything about it. So he just goes off into the forest, and a certain bull elephant likewise. What do you think is the significance of these parallel cases, the Buddha and the bull elephant?

Sagaramati: It is the animal imagery that was given to the Buddha earlier on.

S: Yes. It also suggests a feeling for animal life. You find this very much in early Indian literature. Animals are regarded as sentient beings. They are not sentimentalised or regarded as human, but they are definitely other living beings and regarded and treated in much the same way as human beings. There is a feeling of sympathy between human beings and animals. What about the verse?

'Herein agreeth mind with mind, of sage And elephant whose tusks are like a plough pole,
Since both alike love forest solitude.'

Here we see that the same sort of feelings are attributed to the human being - in this case the sage - and the elephant. They both like the forest solitude. No doubt the ancient Indians observed that some bull elephants did like to go off on their own, away from the herd - what in modern times we usually call the rogue elephant. He just likes to get away from the herd and be on his own.

There is also the interesting point that even the Buddha was not prepared to put up with (just) anything. Even the Buddha has his rights, as it were. You might think that, being the Buddha, he ought to have gone on enduring it indefinitely. But, no, the Buddha also has his rights. Even though he is an Enlightened human being, the Buddha is still a human being. He still apparently needs - or at least would like - some time to himself.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now at that time the Bharadvajan, the venerable Scrap-hunter (so called) was sitting not far from the [201] "Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, being a forest-dweller, an alms-quester, a rag-robe-wearer, using three robes, needing little, contented, a recluse, shunning society, one of ardent energy, upholding the scrupulous life, given to the higher thought.

Now the Exalted One saw the venerable Scrap-hunter so sitting ... and at that time ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'Reville not, harm not, live by rule restrained; Of food take little; sleep and sit alone; Keep thy mind bent upon the higher thought.' Such is the message of awakened ones."

S: This is quite a well-known verse which occurs in several other places in the Canon. The venerable Scrap-hunter seems to have been a particularly strict and ascetic monk. He was 'a forest-dweller, an alms-quester,' - that is to say, he didn't accept invitations to meals at people's houses; 'a rag-robe-wearer' - this is probably why he is called Scrap-hunter, because he used to hunt for scraps of cloth to make into rag robes; 'using three robes' - that is, not more, not having a spare robe; 'needing little, contented, a recluse, shunning society, one of ardent energy, upholding the scrupulous life, given to the higher thought' - higher thought in the sense of meditation or even contemplation.

Then the verse says:

'Reville not, harm not, live by rule restrained; Of food take little; sleep and sit alone; Keep thy mind bent upon the higher thought' ...

in other words, higher states of consciousness ...

'Such is the message of awakened ones.'

That is, of course, of the Buddhas. Any particular point arising there?

: The footnote says that he was 'etad-agga among "lion-roarers"', and that comes up in other places. What does that mean?

S: The foremost; the foremost among the preachers, it means. There is a discourse, I think in the Digha Nikaya, where the Buddha refers to all his leading disciples and says in what respect each is the chief.

Subhuti: You mentioned at one time that you might be reading from that at the time of ordinations.

S: Right, yes.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

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Now at that time the venerable Sariputta was sitting not far from the Exalted One, in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright. He was one who needed little, contented, a recluse, shunning society, one of ardent energy, given to the higher thought. And the Exalted One saw the venerable Sariputta so sitting ... and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Of high thoughts, serious, silent and trained in ways of worth, - Grievs come not unto such, one calmed and mindful ever."

S: It seems the Buddha was rather in the habit of making these little comments or udanas on

various disciples, maybe to encourage the others.

'Of high thoughts' - adhicitta, presumably, which would suggest absorption in higher states of consciousness, the dhyanas.

: Adhi - is that A D I?

S: A D H I. You notice that all these leading disciples, even though they are presumably arhants - whatever that might have meant at that stage - are all keeping up their practice, as it were. Do you notice that? - Sariputra, Moggallana, Kassapa, the Bharadvajan. Why do you think that is? Do you think that in fact is the position: that even after their Enlightenment they are keeping up their practice? Or is it something else?

: Perhaps they preferred to.

S: Yes, perhaps that was just the natural way for them to behave. Maybe they just liked sitting there, apparently doing nothing.

Subhuti: It is not 'practising'.

S: It is more like giving a natural expression to their actually existent state of mind. It is what I think the Zen people call practice after Enlightenment.

Let us go on, then, to section viii, which is rather different in character.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now at that time the Exalted One was esteemed, honoured, thought much of, worshipped; he had deference paid to him, and got supplies of robes and alms-food, bed and lodging, comforts and medicines for sickness; so likewise was the order of monks. But the Wanderers holding other views were not esteemed or honoured ... they got not supplies and so forth. Then those Wanderers [203] holding other views, unable to bear the honour done to the Exalted One and the order of monks, went to Sundari the Woman-wanderer, and said this to her: 'Sister, you can do a good turn to your kinsmen.'

'What can I do, brothers? What is it possible for me to do? My very life is a sacrifice for the sake of my kinsmen.'

'Then, sister, go you oft and oft to Jeta Grove.'

'Very well, brothers,' replied Sundari to those wanderers of other views, and went oft and oft to Jeta Grove.

Now when those Wanderers of other views were assured that it was rumoured abroad thus, 'Sundari the Woman-wanderer has been clearly seen by many folk going oft and oft to Jeta Grove,' they killed her, and there and then buried her in a hole in a ditch, and went to Pasenadi the Kosalan rajah and said, 'Maharajah, that Sundari the Woman-wanderer is nowhere to be seen'.

'Well, where do you suspect that she is?'

'In Jeta Grove, maharajah.'

'Then scour Jeta Grove for her.'

So those Wanderers of other views, after scouring Jeta Grove, pulled her body out of the ditch where it had been buried, put it on a litter, and had it taken into Savatthi and paraded about from cart-road to cart-road, from crossways to crossways; and when they met folk they roused their indignation by saying, 'Behold, brothers, the deed of the Sakya sons! Shameless are these recluses! The Sakya sons are wicked, evildoers, liars, no livers of the Brahma-life! They will claim to be livers of dhamma, livers at peace, Brahma-livers, truth-tellers, virtuous, men of the lovely life. But there is in them no recluseship, no Brahmahood. Their recluseship is spotted, their Brahmahood is spotted. How could they have recluseship? How could they have Brahmahood? They have abandoned their recluseship, they have abandoned their Brahmahood. Pray, how could a man, after playing a man's part, take the life of a woman?'

At that time also in Savatthi, when folk saw the monks they assailed, abused, annoyed, and harassed them with vile and bitter words, saying, 'Shameless are these recluses ... (as above)... Pray, how could a man, after playing a man's part, take the life of a woman?'

Now a great number of monks, robing themselves in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi in quest of alms-food, and having ranged Savatthi, after returning from their alms-round and eaten their meal, came to the Exalted One ... and said: 'In Savatthi now, sir, when folk see the monks they assail them with vile and bitter words, saying "Shameless are these recluses! and so forth."'

'This noise, monks, will not last for long. It will last for just seven days. At the end of seven days it will vanish away. Therefore, monks, do ye with this verse reprimand those folk who, on seeing the monks, assail them with vile and bitter words:

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Who speaks untruth to purgatory goes; He too who, doing, says: 'I do it not'; Both these, in passing on, equal become, Men of base actions in another world.'

So those monks got this verse by heart in the presence of the Exalted One, and when folk, on seeing the monks, assailed them with vile and bitter words, they reprimanded them with this verse. Then people thought: These recluses, the Sakya sons, are not guilty. The deed was not done by them. These recluses, the Sakya sons, are on oath.

And sure enough that noise lasted no long time. It lasted just seven days. At the end of seven days it vanished away. Then a number of monks went to the Exalted One ... and said: 'It is a wonder, sir! It is marvellous, sir, how truly spoken were the Exalted One's words, to wit: "This noise, monks, will not last long. It will last for just seven days. At the end of seven days it will vanish away." Sir, that noise has vanished away.'

Then the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Folk unrestrained pierce through (a man) with words As an elephant with arrows in a fight.
Hearing the utterance of bitter speech Let a monk bear it unperturbed at heart."

S: In previous sections we saw that the Buddha's teaching was spreading more and more widely and becoming more and more popular, and having more and more followers. But now we see a reaction from some, at least, of the other wanderers, who became very jealous of the success of the Buddha and his teaching. There is again a reference to a woman wanderer; there has been one reference before. This woman wanderer seems to be on her own, wandering alone.

You notice a little touch of dramatic irony in her reply. She says, "'What can I do, brothers? What is it possible for me to do? My very life is a sacrifice for the sake of my kinsman".' Little does she know that they intend to murder her. She seems also rather compliant; she does exactly as they ask without bothering to inquire what it is all about.

What is meant by 'Sakya sons'? Who were the Sakyaputtas?

: Followers of the Buddha.

S: Followers of the Buddha; the Buddha was from the Sakya tribe, so his followers were often called Sakyaputtas or Sakyaputtasamanas.

This whole episode shows that envy and jealousy are really terrible things and that, even in religious circles, they can arise and produce disastrous consequences.

: What does it mean, 'after playing a man's part'?

S: Presumably, according to the commentary, after having intercourse with her. The idea of the wanderers of other views was that the public should get the idea that one of these wicked monks, or even more than [205] one, had had an affair with Sundari and, in order to hide the fact and prevent her talking about it, had murdered her and hidden the body. That was the idea. The Commentary says 'Purisa-kiccan karitva = methuna-pati-sevanan sandhaya vadanti', which means after having intercourse. In other words, a rather nasty little plot. But it doesn't come to anything. The Buddha takes no steps about the matter, except to ask the monks to recite that little verse, and the people come to understand - they are not such fools - that the bhikkhus are, as it were, putting themselves on oath. In other words, 'If we have done anything wrong and if we are not speaking the truth, may we go to hell'. But it also applies to the other people.

You notice the somewhat contemptuous way in which the Buddha refers to all this uproar. He says, 'This noise, monks, will not last for long. It will last for just seven days.' He also knows, very likely, that the king of Kosala, Pasenadi, has full confidence in him and his disciples. After all, it is only the king who can do anything about a murder, and the king apparently is not intervening.

You also see that, for the wanderers of other views, it was also a matter of economics. The wanderers holding other views were not 'esteemed or honoured ... they got not supplies and so forth'. Things were becoming pretty desperate for them; their very livelihood was at stake, so they stopped at nothing, even at slander or murder.

It also shows that it is dangerous to be too successful, or too openly successful. It reminds me rather of George Bernard Shaw's comment on Mahatma Gandhi's assassination: 'It shows it is dangerous to be too good.' So in order not to provoke any reaction, it is wise sometimes not to be too openly or too blatantly successful, but to play it down a little bit.

The second udana is, of course, a verse of general advice in a situation of that sort:

Folk unrestrained pierce through (a man) with words
As an elephant with arrows in a fight.
Hearing the utterance of bitter speech
Let a monk bear it unperturbed at heart.'

There are several rather similar verses in the Canon. People are almost bound to say unpleasant things from time to time. There is not much one can do about it. One just has to bear it without allowing one's own mind to become disturbed.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground. Now at that time the venerable Upasena, Vanganta's son, had gone for seclusion and solitude, and to him occurred this discursive thought: A gain to me! Well gotten is it by me that my teacher is the Exalted One, the Arahant, the rightly awakened one; that I went forth from home to the homeless in the well-proclaimed dhamma-discipline! A gain to me that my comrades in the Brahma-life are virtuous and of a lovely nature; that I am one who has fulfilled the virtues; that I am composed, one-pointed [206] in mind, an arahant in whom the cankers are gone, that I am of great psychic powers! Lucky has been my life and lucky shall be my death!

Now the Exalted One, with his mind grasping the thought of the venerable Upasena, Vanganta's son, at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

He grieves not at death's end whom life oppresses not. If he, inspired, hath seen his path, 'mid grief he grieves not. For the monk who hath torn out the craving to become, Whose mind is calm, whose faring on in births is done with, - For such an one there is no more coming to be."

S: Once again one sees the hand of the editor here. Do you notice this? It is an interesting contrast with the previous episode. The previous episode revolves around jealousy; this one revolves around rejoicing in merits. Upasena rejoices in the merits of others and also of himself, quite impartially. He is grateful to the Buddha, to his fellow disciples; he is happy that he has the opportunity of leading the spiritual life, becoming an arahant and so on. This is a very good example of rejoicing in merits. He is *etad-agga* of those who were *samanta-pasadika*, or 'altogether charming'. He seems to have had a very charming nature, which is expressed in the fact that he is rejoicing in merits of others and himself. No doubt it is not accidental that this little section comes immediately after the preceding one.

: What is the significance of 'discursive thought' in this passage?

S: Presumably it is the *vitaka vicara* which you have when you are in the first dhyana. He is in a meditative mood, but he hasn't gone deeply into the absorptions - there is still mental activity - and this reflection, this train of thought, occurs to him.

It is rather interesting that this rejoicing in merits sometimes seems very difficult for people to

practise. Has anyone got any reflections or comments on this?

ABC: I must admit, I do feel in myself a bit of a block against rejoicing ... It is almost a kind of inhibition, a feeling that there is something wrong or that it wouldn't be well received.

S: Do you think there is any possibility that, in some people's minds, rejoicing in merits could be associated with flattery?

Devaraja: So, therefore, they are unable to rejoice in the merits of others?

S: Well, they don't like to express it openly to a person's face: 'Oh, that is a very good deed that you have done', etc. Do you think that is a possibility?

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: I think there certainly is, because I find it very difficult to accept it when somebody says it to me, (Voices: Yes!), which I suppose reflects that confusion.

S: It has been said that one of the signs of a truly humble man is that he can accept praise. (Voices: Yes.)

: I suppose that applies to gifts, too - of any kind, really.

S: Yes, right. People often find it difficult to receive gracefully. In the East they are much better at that, I must say, and certainly in Buddhist circles even quite ordinary people find rejoicing in merits very natural and easy. This is one reason why, on festival occasions in Buddhist countries, there is a much more happy, joyous and positive atmosphere. People really are rejoicing in merits - rejoicing in the merits of the Buddha and the great disciples, their own teachers and the whole occasion, and everybody who has joined in and has helped to make it a success.

I think I have spoken before about some of the meetings among the ex-Untouchables, where everybody gets thanked at the end of the meeting who has even remotely contributed to its success, and everybody gets garlanded - this is their particular tradition - so that no one feels neglected or overlooked or resentful, and any little misunderstandings are smoothed out in this way. Absolutely everybody is garlanded. They don't leave anybody out.

Devaraja: I must say that I had a bit of confusion about this, because once after a particular jumble sale we had I wanted to specifically name people and thank them, and I must say that at events at Aryatara we used to do that - somebody had helped prepare the food and one would say, 'And thank you particularly to So-and-so for all their help with the food', after the end of the event. But the general attitude up in London seemed to be that we shouldn't single out anyone.

S: That is true. You have to include everybody. That is why the ex-Untouchables take no chances whatever. They would rather garland two or three people who have done nothing than leave out even one person who has contributed even very slightly. The danger is that you may forget somebody. So there should not be any question of singling out for thanks those who have contributed more than others. Absolutely everybody must be included, even though you might mention the more prominent helpers first or garland them first, but nobody must be

left out. That is the important thing. If anybody is left-out, that means trouble, especially in a small village. So if you do thank, you must thank everybody. If any names are mentioned, everybody's name must be mentioned - everybody who has played any part or helped in any way, however remotely or indirectly. You mustn't forget.

I have known occasions on which up to a hundred people have been individually thanked and garlanded. Usually, what happens is that the wit or the wag of the village - who knows everybody, of course - is given the task of garlanding. He calls out the names one by one and they shamle up to the platform or microphone. Everybody cheers and claps, and the village wit speaks a few words about them, in a way that will appeal to everybody. This can go on for a whole hour or more. After all, they all have to live together in the small village, so they don't want any [208] misunderstandings or quarrels. So they are very careful and very particular about this. Nobody should be left out; that is the great principle.

Maybe we should experiment a bit. Maybe people feel it is a bit naive or crude.

: Maybe people are a little too sophisticated.

S: Maybe. Or maybe they feel that the proceedings have gone on long enough, anyway.

: It is certainly worth trying once or twice, just to see what happens.

S: We should express thanks whenever we possibly can, especially to people who have helped us who do not actually belong to the Movement. It may mean just sending a thank-you letter. But these things should be done, just so that they don't feel that their help is taken for granted.

Why do you think that people often find rejoicing in merits difficult? (Pause.) Often it seems there is a grudging attitude rather than an attitude of appreciation.

: Perhaps they are unhappy about their own lack of that particular merit and ... jealous of other people.

S: Yes. I must say that in the Buddhist circles I was familiar with in the East, there seemed to be very much less of that. Ordinary people, at least, were very happy to rejoice in the merits of others - that is, the spiritual merits of others - and to give them wholehearted recognition. This is, no doubt, the influence of Buddhist tradition, consciously cultivated over the centuries.

: One thing I sometimes feel is that it can easily become a pure formality. If you always compliment a person it can easily degenerate into flattery. If you always compliment everybody, if they have perhaps cooked a meal, it may become meaningless after a while.

Devaraja: Maybe that is not such a good example. Though it may be the same sort of compliment, it doesn't mean to say that it's at all ...

S: The fact that it is actually expressed means that there is some feeling there, however little it may be.

According to Vajrabodhi - we discussed this quite a lot in Helsinki - the Finns are particularly prone to jealousy. They do not like to praise or recognize anybody. They will always try to pull them down, and they are absolutely against the idea of anybody being in any way better than anybody else. There may be a touch of this in all Western countries.

Devaraja: I suppose it is this very intense competition and ...ness between people.

S: Yes, and also the idea - maybe another micchaditthi - that everybody is equal and everybody is the same, nobody is better than anybody else; no one is more highly developed than anybody else. Therefore, why should you recognize them as such or rejoice that they are more highly developed [209] than you? How is it possible, (they think, because) you are all the same, all equal? The Finns, again according to Vajrabodhi - I could not observe it myself - feel this very strongly and are always ready to pull down anybody who becomes at all prominent in any particular sphere.

Devaraja: That must be why there aren't any really outstanding Finnish names or personalities.

S: Apparently, in the old days, anyone even a little bit outstanding was just killed. Chiefs were always killed. Anybody who became a bit prominent in a village or town was killed. Priests were usually killed, until quite recently.

: Priests - you mean Christian priests?

S: Yes. Anyone becoming a little bit prominent was just killed. And this envy or jealousy - again according to Vajrabodhi - goes deeply into the Finnish character. It is a strong resentment against anybody being, or considering himself as being, better than they are. This really inhibits the whole concept of the Higher Evolution. As Vajrabodhi also said, he couldn't play some parts of the tapes on the Higher Evolution because in certain places I had suggested that some people were more highly developed than others, and he said that this idea - that some people are more highly evolved than others - is totally unacceptable to the Finns. He said that he had thought about it very carefully, and he re-interprets it in terms of making the comparison between yourself as you were and yourself as you are, or between yourself as you are and yourself as you will be in the future. But he said that, if you try to compare one person with another, even in a very general historical way, the Finns react very strongly.

: Is he hoping to - I mean, is that attitude beginning to change among the people who come to his classes?

S: I don't know, because he has soft-pedalled those lectures. But perhaps some of them may be open to the idea that some human beings are, or can be, more highly developed than others.

So resentment, jealousy, and envy, seem to go along together.

Devaraja: I wonder to what extent, also, it is a product of the family background, the parental investment in children and (the desire) that they should do really well and come out top? I wonder whether, in the larger or more extended family situation, that is less likely to occur, because children are just children (in that situation)? I remember your description of Maori

(families) in New Zealand.

S: I must say that, looking back on my own experience in the East and in the West, I get the impression that people in the East on the whole, as far as I encountered them, were much more appreciative than people in the West, and much more ready to express appreciation in a wholehearted and happy way. They were pleased that you were better than they were or that they thought you were better than they were. They were happy to find someone who knew something better than they knew it or who had done better than they had done.

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ABC: They are much more spiritual there anyway; they have a tradition.

S: I wouldn't quite say that. It is as though they are more ready to recognize something higher when they see it, even though they themselves may not be anywhere near that. They don't feel any resentment or jealousy, or anything of that sort.

ABC: I think that's due to their Hindu background. They are used to regarding gods as higher.

S: It also may be due to the social background, because it is also the way in which you look upon your elder brothers and sisters, your parents, your aunts and uncles, your senior cousins, your grandparents. But it is very natural and spontaneous, and very willing. It doesn't usually have to be exacted. It is quite spontaneous. It is not something they have been trained or conditioned into; it is very natural. They really do feel that way, in most instances anyway. This is one reason why I feel that there is such a happy atmosphere around Buddhist festivals in the East: everyone is really happy that the Buddha was born and that the Buddha gained Enlightenment, that he did preach the Dharma and did found the Sangha. Everybody is really happy and rejoices in that thought. If someone does a good deed, builds a vihara, or publishes a book on Buddhism or something of that sort, they are all happy; they really rejoice in it.

It is almost as if people there are much more good-natured than they are in the West. But again, one must be careful not to generalize too much.

ABC: Maybe that's because they haven't got such a strong sense of ego, of separateness, as they have in the West.

Devaraja: Do you think it's a spiritual conditioning?

S: You mean the readiness with which they rejoice in merits?

Devaraja: I mean the unreadiness ...

S: I'd say it has very little to do with the spiritual, strictly speaking. It is more their general emotional attitude in a quite ordinary human way; that they are not resentful, but they have a more positive emotion and can express it freely. They are not frustrated, or bitter, or resentful. I think it probably has much more to do with that. Also, of course, the tradition, especially Buddhist tradition, has all the time encouraged positive emotions.

Devaraja: I wondered to what extent it's opposite in the West, the spiritual conditioning - this inability to rejoice in merits.

S: I don't see why there should be a spiritual conditioning of that sort coming, presumably, from Christianity. One could even say that there could be an equivalent of rejoicing in merits in the context of Christianity. You rejoice that Christ came, and you rejoice in the possibility of salvation, the merits of the saints, and so on. Presumably that would not be inconsistent with the Christian tradition. It may be something [211] to do with the fact that very often people in the East are more happy, anyway; it may be as simple as that. If you are unhappy within yourself, you don't feel like rejoicing in other people's merits.

: Yes, you can't really isolate one from the other, can you?

S: No. The rejoicing in merits is just the natural outcome, in a certain situation, of a generally positive emotional state. So if we find it difficult to rejoice in merit, it means our general emotional state is not very positive. It is that that we have got to tackle.

It seems to me of late that this is more and more important - that there should be a positive emotional atmosphere, and that people's mental state should be emotionally positive; that there should be a happy atmosphere. Do you feel that there is that sort of happy atmosphere around the centres here?

: On the whole, I would think so.

S: On the whole; well, if that is the case, it means that sooner or later the rejoicing in merits will develop quite naturally, if people are happy.

: The climate's got a lot to do with it.

S: Maybe, yes. The Finns are certainly affected by their long, dark winters, and suicides go up during that time; and they really are correspondingly affected by their spring when it does finally come, and their summer. They don't want to work; they don't work then. Everything closes down for the summer. Even necessary shops close very early in the day.

On the whole I would say that the mood in New Zealand was reasonably happy, especially around the centre.

So it seems that, if one wants to do anything about the rejoicing in merits, one has to do something about the general emotional state, and try to make it more and more positive.

Has anybody got any suggestions on that - it is a very important topic - on how to ensure greater emotional positivity, and what stands in the way? Any ideas?

ABC: Certainly brighten up Council meetings.

S: Well, how? Is that a suggestion: to brighten up Council meetings?

ABC: Yes.

S: Well, how could they be brightened up?

: I suppose things like - you talk of the oriental thing of always bringing a little gift ...

S: Mm, yes.

: - all those sort of things all tell.

S: Right, yes.

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Subhuti: It's quite difficult, really. There's no substitute for being you can't develop it in a vacuum; there's got to be other people around to be positive for an exchange of that sort to (develop). It is like the current mental health thinking, where you group a whole lot of gloomy people together and expect them to get better.

S: (chuckling) Yes.

: Again, things like bright colours ...

S: Yes, indeed. Colours are quite important. And air and light, and even cleanliness and tidiness. Also being properly rested, and having had enough to eat. All these things are important. If you turn up to a Council meeting tired and not having had time to eat, you may transact the business quite efficiently but you will hardly radiate sweetness and light.

I think a lot of people - part of the time, at least - are in a state of subdued irritation. It may be just the general wear and tear of existence, especially in the cities.

: Just be prepared to crack a joke or two.

S: Yes. (Laughter.) Especially when it isn't received in gloomy silence!

: I notice that about you. After you come in, you make a kind of cheery quip, and slap somebody on the back, you know. That really helps.

S: I don't usually appreciate the gloom that is often around! When I did this in my early days, in the days of the Buddhist Society and the Hampstead vihara, it was very ill received. Some people were quite scandalized that I made jokes in the course of lectures on Buddhism - even when it was an illustrative joke, to illustrate a Dharma point. They thought it quite out of place.

Some of you don't realize what changes there have been since those days. I have often spoken about the first Wesak meeting that I attended in England, and I am not going to tell the story over again here. It was at the Caxton Hall, and it was so gloomy. Not a smile! Not a bit of rejoicing! It was really strange and weird, and I couldn't help referring to it and saying how different Wesak celebrations were in the East. There, everybody, I said, seemed happy that the Buddha had gained Enlightenment, but they didn't seem very happy about it. There were one or two watery smiles at that little remark. It was all speeded up, and Mr Humphreys kept looking at his watch, and he said: 'We have to be out within an hour. We can't spend more than an hour celebrating Wesak!' He was very abrupt and business-like, and he shoved everybody out on the stroke! (Laughter.) I was quite disappointed. I had been away from England for twenty years and was looking forward to my first Wesak celebration in England, and this was all I got! (Pause.)

Sona: (This) is quite important on retreat, I suppose. I sort of enjoy...

S: I think that usually develops quite naturally after a few days, when the effects of the wear and tear of the city have worn off.

Sona: You get the pain in your knees ... (Laughter.)

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ABC: Well, meditating is so painful, that when you are outside the meditation room, ... (Laughter. Pause.)

: You shouldn't have said that!

S: Hear, hear!

Sona: I haven't been on many retreats, but on (my first) few retreats I felt that everyone got over-serious, and that wasn't particularly positive or enjoyable. The first experience I had of retreat was a very large one, and just at the end of it there were two ... took you up to your ordination. I was quite amazed to see all these people just walking round the garden and looking - as you say, when you meet people you get affected by them; and after a very short time I was walking round the garden. I thought, 'I must be getting on with ... !' (Laughter.)

S: So do you still walk around the garden there?

Sona: I now walk around with a big smile.

S: Good.

Devaraja: I think sometimes there is a false thing made - somebody mentioned (that) everything was crushed in the name of mindfulness on retreats!

S: Yes. That is one extreme. There is another extreme, of which we also have to beware!

Sona: But, especially on beginners' retreats, it is very important for Order Members to be in a really positive state.

S: Yes, and that means preparing. It doesn't mean that you have to act artificially all cheery and jolly, but you must make sure that you spend the preceding few days in such a way that you arrive at the retreat not tired, but rested and refreshed; you have, ideally, had a few quiet days to yourself, and you come along in a positive and cheerful mood, really looking forward to the retreat - not dashing up at the last minute, straight from a Council meeting, with a whole lot of work still to be done, quickly whip on your kesa and take the Puja - that is not the way to do it.

These are counsels of perfection. Sometimes circumstances don't permit them to be fulfilled easily. But the atmosphere of a retreat, when it is a beginners' retreat, is very important, because that will be many people's first experience.

Another point which occurs to me is connected, though maybe not very closely. I have

referred to it before. That is the fact that there are - I am talking now in the context of the Movement - no generally recognized manners and customs and ways of behaviour. This question arises especially in connection with how we should behave towards newcomers - that is, people who just turn up at the centre. Do you step forward and greet them or even shake them by the hand, or show them where to put their hat and coat, or do you just leave them alone to find their own way around, and so on? I think that one difficulty is that most of the people within the Movement have, by virtue of the very fact that they are in it at all, tried to break with conventional modes of [214] behaviour, which even includes conventional courtesies; so, even if they feel like welcoming or doing the right thing, they don't know quite how to do it or what to do. They don't want to fall back on the conventional, maybe very middle-class, ways of behaviour. The Buddhist ways of behaving don't seem very natural - in many cases they don't even know what those are - and they are left not knowing exactly what to do.

Devaraja: Yes. Still, people can say hello. That doesn't seem middle-class or particularly unusual!

S: It depends how you say it. I have seen people turning towards a newcomer and saying 'Hello' (in a flat tone), and turning away again. That is not very helpful. There is a pseudo-casualness which is at bottom rather cold and selfish, I feel; a pseudo-informality which is often an expression of indifference.

Sona: It would be really good if people could, at some time or other when they are introducing themselves, or going up to someone - shake them by the hand. That is very important, actually. It's rather like the elephant turning round; you put all your attention there, and then there is the physical contact. That seems very important. I try to make a point, when I meet someone, of shaking their hand.

ABC: Either that or be very open with them. I think if you're very open, it comes across, and that is much more than ...

Sona: I think that (the handshake) helps you in being more open.

: The physical contact.

Sona: Well, I don't want to lay too much stress on it, but you're doing something with your mind, you're doing something with your speech, and you're doing something with your body.

S: Right. (Pause. A gesture? followed by laughter.)

This was a very vexed question around the centre, wasn't it? I couldn't help noticing that newcomers were usually just ignored, and this was very bad indeed. I am sure it is much better now, but maybe there is still some room for improvement. Has this been remarked upon or discussed recently?

: I have certainly thought about it on Wednesdays - beginners nights.

ABC: What do you do?

: Well, if there is more than one newcomer, you obviously can't deal with them (all). I make sure that I actually greet everybody ...

S: And make sure that they are newcomers. This used to be a difficulty, because you'd greet someone as though he was a newcomer and discover that he had been coming for longer than you had! Probably that doesn't happen now. In the old days, I used always to have to greet new people myself, because even the Order Members of those days didn't seem very interested and would often be talking among themselves, and I would [215] go round speaking to the newcomers. This is four or five years ago. I think people are less embarrassed now to greet newcomers than they were. I don't know why people used apparently to feel embarrassed. They were reluctant to step forward and say 'hello', 'good evening', or something of that sort.

Can any of you remember your first introduction and first coming along, and whether you were actually greeted or welcomed?

: I was greeted by you.

S: By me; good.

: (inaudible), actually.

S: Oh, were you! Oh, good. Anybody else?

: In some ways, I was quite surprised I ever managed to stay, because it was terribly insecure. It was like a waiting room for a particularly nasty dentist; we used to sit round the walls in complete silence.

Sona: It was quite bad in Archway, when I used to go on a Wednesday night on my own and I just used to sit there and wait to go home, wait to go to the ...

Devaraja: I remember the first time that M... came down with me. She came in, took one look round and went straight out again. (Laughter.)

S: I wonder why people had this difficulty?

ABC: When I went down there, there was a complete difference of consciousness. I just didn't know what was going on. I was in a state of indecision for months, just wondering what was going on.

: Didn't you realize you were in a higher state of consciousness?! (Laughter.) ... I think there was some equation of being spiritual with being detached; (as if) you didn't really need anybody else or need to be friendly to anybody else, because you were completely self-sufficient.

ABC: It might also be a kind of insecurity (on the part) of the people concerned, not being able to greet other people, or feeling that they would be opening themselves to other people.

S: Or that they would be presuming, even. I do know at least one particular cluster of groups

that discouraged any sort of communication before or after their meetings: that was the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky movement. Several of our Friends came from that, and they told me that (the people there) always were completely non-communicative. They were discouraged from talking to anybody before or after the meetings of the groups. So the feeling might have got around that this was the spiritual way to behave, as it were.

Sagaramati: I think (it was to do with) dope-smoking and things like that. You get the atmosphere in places like that of very much sitting round doing nothing, ...

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S: Yes, non-communicating. And four or five years ago, quite a few of the people who were coming along were very much into dope. At one time, about three-quarters of the people coming along - (Laughter) - yes, quite easily; quite definitely, yes, five or six years ago. Or maybe six or seven years ago. It has sort of tailed off since. But certainly three quarters of them. It was not that they had taken it at some time or other, but that they were regularly into it at the time that they were coming along. That may have had something to do with it.

: It occurs to me that, outside the centre, I have found it very difficult, and so have two of my friends, talking to other people about (the Movement). You know: 'Haven't seen you for a long time; what are you into?' or something like that. To begin with, one is very unsure about the whole thing and it is quite difficult to explain, because I suppose people have such misapprehensions. Maybe this is a hangover, even in the centre. You still feel unsure about it and you don't like to stand up and be counted. It takes a long time to go, that (feeling).

: I think that's a sort of confidence in what you're doing... I suppose some find that they do tend to hesitate a little, but I'm much more prepared to tell people exactly what I'm doing (than I used to be).

S: It is quite difficult, because sometimes I find this myself in travelling around, especially when I am on an aeroplane and there is the usual talkative American sitting next to me, which usually happens. They nearly always ask, 'What do you do?', and it isn't easy to summarize in a few words.

ABC: I remember explaining to my mother what I was doing and finding it very, very difficult to say exactly. I always felt guilty!

Sona: I find that quite often with people I resort to telling them I am a yoga teacher, that I am going to do yoga or going on a yoga retreat.

S: But this is quite a good starting point.

Sona: It is true, and ...

S: Or, at least, part of the truth; or not untrue. It is good to go from the known to the unknown.

Sona: People are often more ready than you expect them to be, if you say you are a Buddhist. I often used to think that some people would react, you know, ...

S: Well, I do think those days, on the whole, have gone. There has been quite a big change over the last fifteen or twenty years, even in the last five or six years, and it is becoming almost socially acceptable to be a Buddhist. We don't want to be too acceptable, of course! That would defeat our purpose.

Sona: An American came over to play tennis with us one day. He asked us what we were doing, were we on vacation? and I said, 'No, we are all Buddhists coming to study.' And he just said, 'Oh, yes,' and carried on playing.

S: Well, 'study' is relatively intelligible.

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"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. On that occasion the venerable Sariputta was sitting not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, contemplating his own state of calm.

And the Exalted One saw the venerable Sariputta so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

For the monk whose mind is calmed and who hath cut The cord of lives, his faring on in births Is done with. Freed is he from Mara's bondage."

S: Once again, Sariputta is sitting cross-legged and upright. This time, he is 'contemplating his own state of calm'. What do you think that means?

: He is practising development of equanimity; a bit like priminettavadi.

S: To me it seems more like the 'just sitting'. He is just, as it were, mindfully and happily reviewing, though not thinking about, what he has actually achieved. This is quite important in Buddhism generally: not only that you should experience something but should know that you experience, and even know that you know. It is knowledge of the destruction of the asravas, not simply that you have destroyed the asravas, but you know what you have done: you know that you have destroyed them.

: If he was an arhant, he wouldn't be needing to develop, would he?

S: No, not actually to develop. It is like a very rich man, for instance, who doesn't need to acquire any more wealth but just spends the evening happily reviewing his investments and looking through his portfolio.

Devaraja: I don't know how relevant this is to that, but I find it a great help in absorbing experience to try to formulate it conceptually, or even write something down. It helps to embed it more. I wonder to what extent that applies to what you were saying about knowing that one knows.

S: I would say it was also akin to rejoicing in merits: 'contemplating his own state of calm'. He is appreciating himself, in a way, though not with any suggestion of egotism.

Sona: Sometimes I have felt that when I am, perhaps, sitting and reviewing, in a similar way, what I'm doing and what I've done, and being a little proud of it, and thinking, 'That is the ego coming up' and trying to slice it off and get rid of it. But it is very important.

S: Yes. One should recognize what one has done and, if it is something positive and creative, recognize that fact, too; but don't let the ego come in.

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There is an interesting anecdote in this connection with regard to Sariputta and Moggallana, apparently in the days before they became arhants. The story goes something like this. One evening, Moggallana met Sariputta coming out of the forest, and he said to Sariputta, 'What has happened? You look very happy, very radiant.' Sariputta said, 'All day I have been in the forest, dwelling in' - I think he said - 'second dhyana, and never once did I have the thought that I was dwelling in second dhyana.' So then the Buddha commented upon this with a little pun. He said, 'This is how true men declare their experience. They declare the meaning of it - attha - but do not bring in the self - atta.' I think this little incident is in Some Sayings of the Buddha. (?)

Sona: Quite often, when I travel on tube trains, especially in the rush hour, I have quite positive emotions, and I see all these other people sitting around, and it makes me realize how lucky I am.

S: I noticed this some time ago. I think it must have been the year before last, when I came to London from Cornwall. We had a little meeting - it was the rejoicing in merits at Ananda's editing of twenty-one issues of the Newsletter; we had a little festivity, a little dinner at Asvajit's and Jinamatta's flat. I had to travel on the tube up to Highgate, and I observed the faces of the people on the tube, and when I entered the flat and saw these twenty happy and mindful faces all around, it was such a big difference, such a tremendous change. It was very, very noticeable. It seemed almost like a different race of human beings, a different species. It was very striking.

Devaraja: It's nice to know we're improving!

Sona: Maybe (we) ought to go on the tube, once in a while! But if you go on it too regularly, it's ...

S: You would get too used to it.

ABC: You get affected yourself, if you're travelling five days a week.

S: 'For the monk whose mind is calmed and who hath cut The cord of lives,' ...

that is, what holds the succession of lives together. Presumably, this is ignorance; ignorance and craving.

- 'his faring on in births Is done with. Freed is he from Mara's bondage.'

(Pause.) Is there anything on all that? We have come to the end of the chapter a little early this evening. Is there any point arising out of anything that we have done today? (Long

silence.)

Sagaramati: Talking about rejoicing in merit, especially the second confession due on Order matters, I personally feel that it would be a good thing to drop it - this sort of 'There is no happiness for me anywhere in the world.' I really feel it encourages that sort of non-rejoicing... I find it very, very heavy. I have noticed that some people don't say it.

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S: Has anybody else got any comments on this? (It is) the passage from the Sutra of Golden Light, presumably?

Sagaramati: Yes.

: It is a very devotional passage, I think; that is its primary benefit.

Sona: I enjoy saying it, actually.

: Me too.

Sona: When I read the corresponding passage in the Bodhicarya a few weeks ago, I talked to Devamitra about it, and the positive attitude that one should have while confessing one's faults. One has got a lot of faults.

S: I think the implication is that there is no happiness for you so long as these faults are unconfessed, because they are a load on your mind until you have confessed them and, presumably, repented of them and made some effort not to commit them again. I don't think - though, without referring to the passage, I can't be completely certain - that it is meant to suggest that you have, all the time, regardless of what you are doing and of your mental state, the idea that there cannot be any happiness for you anywhere. I think it is confined to the context of the confession of faults: that, so long as you have faults unconfessed, and so long as you are making so many mistakes, to the extent that you are committing mistakes there cannot be any happiness for you. Also, of course, the confession of faults must be balanced by the rejoicing in merits which follows immediately afterwards. Maybe if we have a longer 'Confession of Faults' we ought to have a longer 'Rejoicing in Merits'.

: We were trying to find some scriptural passages which were expressive of rejoicing in merit, and it is quite hard, actually.

S: The Sukhavagga of the Dhammapada is a bit like that, quite a bit like that. At least there one is rejoicing in the merits of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Perhaps we ought to write something!

: It may be beyond writing.

S: Suitably flowery.

: Yes!

ABC: Something surging with positive en...ment!

S: And free from micchaditthis! (Laughter.)

: Maybe you'd better write it. (Laughter.)

S: I'll look at it this winter.

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Day Five

Chapter V - The Elder Sona.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the rajah Pasenadi the Kosalan, had gone with the queen Mallika to the upper storey of the palace. Then the rajah Pasenadi, the Kosalan, said this to Mallika the queen: 'Tell me, Mallika, is there anyone dearer to you than the self?'

'To me, maharajah, there is no other dearer than the self. But to you, maharajah, is there any one dearer than the self?'

'To me also Mallika, there is no other dearer than the self.'

Thereafter the rajah Pasenadi, the Kosalan, came down from the palace and went to see the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated, the rajah Pasenadi, the Kosalan, said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, I had gone with the queen Mallika to the upper storey of the palace, and I said this to Mallika the queen ... (and he related the conversation).

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

The whole wide world we traverse with our thought, Finding to man nought dearer than the self. Since aye so dear the self to others is, Let the self-lover harm no other man."

S: Do you see a difference between what Mallika and Pasenadi were saying and what the Buddha says?

: He is taking their attitude and showing that if you like yourself so much, it means that other people feel the same about themselves, so that we shouldn't harm them.

S: The Buddha draws the practical conclusion, but (Mallika and Pasenadi) do not. They just have this little talk, and they agree that everybody loves himself more than he loves anybody else - that to everybody the self is dear. But the Buddha draws the practical conclusion: just remember that others are dear to themselves as you are to yourself, therefore do nothing to them that you would not like done to yourself.

It is as though the Buddha is agreeing that there is nothing wrong with a healthy, non-neurotic self-love. It is just a question of making it more intelligent than it usually is, recognizing that

there are, empirically speaking, a plurality of selves and that they are all dear to themselves; therefore, they should mutually respect that fact. That is even extended to the animal world.

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Some modern Hindu commentators try to interpret this metaphysically. When Mallika says that 'there is no other dearer than the self', according to them this means the supreme Self of the Upanishads; but that doesn't seem very likely from the whole trend of the Pali literature and Buddhist teaching. It is presumably to be understood in a quite ordinary, empirical sense.

Sagaramati: I am not too sure about this idea of a metaphysical Self. I am very woolly about it. Is it the thought of a self, or - ?

S: There are different versions. The general Upanishadic view is that there is an Atman or Self that is equally the Self of all empirical selves, and that all empirical selves are metaphysically identical through their common identity with this metaphysical Self - that there is only one universal subject, as it were, of existence, and that you wrongly imagine that you are Such-and-such or So-and-so. In reality, (it is said,) it is all one metaphysical Self; there is one Subject ultimately behind all your bodies, minds, wills and so on, and you have to try to get back to that ultimate, residual, universal metaphysical Self.

Buddhism does not agree with that; certainly early Buddhism does not. But it figures prominently in Hindu thought, especially in the Vedanta and in the Samkhya.

Subhuti: You say 'certainly early Buddhism does not.' Do you mean that later Buddhism does?

S: No, I don't mean that later Buddhism does, but it may appear to do so, in view of the later Buddhist teaching about the Buddha-nature, that the Buddha-nature is in all, and also about the alaya or store-consciousness. In fact, the Mahayana teachers and thinkers are often accused of somehow smuggling in the Upanishadic Self. I don't personally agree with that, but it is quite easy to understand how it might be thought.

Subhuti: Can you say how they differ?

S: The main difference is that, in the Upanishadic or Vedantic tradition, this Self is conceived of as something substantial; it is a metaphysical entity, whereas one could say that the Buddha-nature is, as it were, an absence of entity or entities. It is not an ontological principle. In fact, in Buddhism there are no ontological principles. But the Self of the Upanishads and the Vedanta is an ontological principle.

Devaraja: What does ontological mean?

S: Ontological means relating to being as such; being as being, not as being anything in particular, but being merely being. 'Ontological' is identical with 'metaphysical' inasmuch as 'metaphysical' is what deals with what is ultimately real, what ultimately exists - the true nature of being; that is, in Western thought.

In Buddhism, when one says that all beings have the same Buddha-nature, it is not meant that they share a common ontological principle but that they are all equally devoid of ultimate

determination. But that being devoid of ultimate determination, of not being this or that specifically, must not itself be reified into an ontological principle.

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Devaraja: (Is it correct to express it thus:) to the extent that - I am just trying to find a simple catch-phrase - all beings, compared with ourselves, are essentially expressions of something real, or essentially have some basis in reality, something real, something true - to that extent, they have the Buddha-nature in common?

S: No, it is almost the opposite ...

Devaraja: When I say 'real' or 'true', I mean ...

S: You could say that Sunyata or Buddha-nature represents a complete absence of restrictions on the possibilities of being. But that absence of restrictions cannot itself be reified as one particular determinate mode of being.

Maybe one could approach it through the principle or teaching about Sunyata. You say that everything is empty, everything is void, which means that everything empirical is a process; there is no unchanging nucleus of that process to which the process pertains. The so-called thing is pure process, pure event. So, inasmuch as it is empty of any unchanging nucleus, it is empty - sunya. So far, so good. All right, this can be said of everything: that everything is sunya, everything is empty, everything is void.

Now, by a little trick or twist of language, you could say that, (because) everything is void, everything participates in the one voidness; everything is equally void, so everything shares in the same voidness; in other words, you start making the fact that everything is void into a principle of voidness, and regarding that voidness as something substantial and actually existent, in which they are all participating. (It is the same) with this idea of every living thing being ultimately Buddha - every living being having the same Buddha-nature; it is not meant that they all share equally in the same ontological principle, but that they equally possess the same unrestricted potential. But that must not be reified into an ontological principle which they all possess. Then it does become identical, in principle at least, with the Upanishadic teaching of the Self.

So the Buddhist teaching about the universality of the Buddha-nature begins to approximate to the Upanishadic teaching about the Self only when that teaching about the Buddha-nature, or about the universality of Sunyata, hardens into, or is reified, as we say, into, or substantialized into, an ontological principle, an existent metaphysical entity. When that happens, you have left Buddhism behind; you have departed from it. You have been misled by language.

ABC: So, by language, you could make even Sunyata (into) something solid.

S: Yes! That is why Nagarjuna says that - let me think of the exact quotation - he says in effect that it doesn't matter if you have the micchaditthi of atma as high as Mount Sumeru, because this can be counteracted by the teaching of sunyata; but if you take the teaching of sunyata literally, there is no hope for you. Because, he says, when you are sick you can take medicine; but when the medicine itself becomes poison, what is there to cure you?

Subhuti: How does the alaya stand in relation to that?

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S: The alaya represents the fact that nothing is lost and that, when the appropriate conditions arise, that particular element or quality will manifest, will reveal itself. But here the reification comes in, if you think of the alaya as an existent thing, a sort of storehouse or treasury in the literal sense where everything actually is, waiting to pop up when the time is ripe. For instance, it is analogous to human memory. You don't think about certain things, but when in the course of conversation you need to know a certain fact, it just pops up from nowhere; you know it. So where does it come from? Where was it in the meantime? If you start thinking of memory as a sort of box where you keep everything, and produce things from that box as they are needed, that is a bit like thinking of the store-consciousness in literal terms; except that the store-consciousness is collective, whereas individual memory is individual. In the same way, you have an example of reification, of being misled by language.

Subhuti: So the alaya is a convolute or recurring process?

S: You could say that. The alaya is a sort of principle of explanation which is invoked to explain the process, or explain the fact that something happens. But it is not to be taken literally, in the sense of there actually being a store or repository in which everything is lying ready to hand. Just as in the case of memory, you must not assume a thing called memory, a repository or box in your brain called memory where everything is lying ready for when it is needed.

Sagaramati: Would this be similar to the Theravadins' idea about bhavanga - the life continuum?

S: In a way, but not entirely. In the case of the bhavanga also, there has been the accusation that it is an Atman being smuggled in. Even Conze takes this view, rather remarkably, in his *Buddhist Thought in India*. But I do not personally agree. It is just a question of the point at which language hardens. This is the real point: that, if you use language in a rather rigid way and take it literally, any Buddhist teaching can harden into its opposite and become un-Buddhistic. In the same way, you could conceivably even use the Upanishadic language in a very loose and flexible way, and it would not matter; it would communicate a sort of Buddhist meaning.

ABC: Then it is more the state of mind that is the important thing, rather than the language. If you have got the state of mind, ...

S: It is a question of how you are using language, which is, of course, dependent upon a state of mind; (of whether) you are using language with awareness and precision and sensitivity, with your eye on the object, on the object, on what you are actually talking about, not with your eye merely on words. This, of course, is where poetic language sometimes has the advantage over rigid scientific language. You could even say that much allegedly scientific language is in fact poetry.

Devaraja: I wanted to get down the end of what you were saying about Nagarjuna's saying about as long as you have the sunyata teaching, after the Mount Sumeru bit. What was it he said about if you misuse the sunyata teaching?

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S: That if you misuse the sunyata teaching, if you take it literally, there is no hope for you. I am paraphrasing Nagarjuna, probably. This is in his Prajnaparamitasastra. He gives the analogy that if you are sick you can take medicine, but suppose the medicine itself turns into poison, then what is there to cure you? So you take the medicine of sunyata to cure the disease of Atmavada, but if you take the medicine of sunyata in the wrong way - if you take that teaching literally - it turns, as it were, to poison. It does you no good, it harms you, and there is no way out then, because the medicine itself has become perverted.

There is another approach to this whole question in connection with the subject of potentiality and actuality, which is quite a vexed thing. For instance, Buddhism makes the statement that if you follow a certain course of practice you can become enlightened. This is quite plain and simple; everybody agrees with it. You can become a Buddha; you can gain Buddhahood. So inasmuch as it is possible for you to gain Buddhahood, you are potentially a Buddha. That is stage two; you are potentially a Buddha inasmuch as you are capable of becoming a Buddha. All right, if you are potentially a Buddha it means that, in a sense, you are now a Buddha: stage three. If you are now a Buddha, where is your Buddhahood? In what sense are you a Buddha? Well, you are a Buddha on some other plane, so you are Buddha and also you are not Buddha, at the same time. So here also you get this reification, all sorts of questions and problems: (such as) 'If I am really a Buddha now, why don't I know it?' Or, 'If I am really a Buddha now, how did I become a not-Buddha? How did I ever come to think that I was not a Buddha?' Also, 'If I am a Buddha now, surely I don't have to do anything about it. If I am a Buddha, I am a Buddha.'

All these metaphysical difficulties arise because you took that second step. Early Buddhism never takes that second step. It remains content with the statement that it is possible for you to reach the state called Buddhahood; it never says 'You are a potential Buddha'. The Mahayana makes that statement later on, and gradually gets into difficulties, philosophically speaking. But early Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, even now, will never make that statement that you are potentially a Buddha, and in a way that is very wise. It simply says that if you take the necessary steps you can reach a certain state of mind called Enlightenment. Early Buddhism does not consider it necessary to say anything more than that. But later forms of Buddhism did start using this language of potentiality.

It is like saying that if, for instance, you want to learn to drive a car, you can do it, if you take the necessary steps. So potentially you can drive a car. So, in a sense, you can drive a car even now. You see the parallel, the analogy? In a sense, you know how to drive a car, because the potentiality is there. That is where the difficulty comes in: the potentiality is there, because that is understood to mean present, now, in you, even though you don't know it; but really 'the potentiality is there' doesn't mean that at all. It means that, if you take the necessary steps, you can learn that. It is the 'there' which creates the misunderstanding. In the same way with the idea of potential Buddhahood, you assume that because, if you go through the necessary steps, and you end up as a Buddha, therefore the potentiality of Buddhahood is there in you now; but it isn't really, except in a very poetic way. It is all right if you consider it as poetry, but if you take it literally and try to reason from it and make a dogma out of it, you land in difficulties.

So this whole question of actuality and potentiality is a very vexed [225] one, and a source of great confusion and micchaditthi. Therefore, early Buddhism never allows itself to go beyond

its original statement; it absolutely refuses to go beyond the original statement. You practise in a particular way, you take certain steps, and then you will reach a state of mind called Buddhahood or Enlightenment. It won't say a word beyond that.

Devaraja: (Isn't it) only that the language of potentiality can have a value as a spur to practice, and that encourages ...

S: Yes. But is it really a spur to practice to say 'You are that already', instead of saying 'You can attain that if you make the effort'? You end up by tying yourself in knots. If you say 'You are that already but you don't know it', you answer 'How can I know it?' Then it becomes a matter merely of knowing and not of doing.

Devaraja: It's not a question of changing, (on that assumption).

S: Like you are told in some Zen classes; 'You are Buddha. Just know that you are. It is your big mistake that you think you are Devaraja; what nonsense! You are Buddha Devaraja; you are enlightened already.' Then you think, 'Well, how did I get into this state? Why did I think I was Devaraja? How did it all happen?' Then it becomes a purely noetic question of how to know that you are Buddha rather than Devaraja. But suppose then they say, as they have to, 'In order to get rid of your ignorance you have got to meditate, do this and do that,' well, you are back where you started. You might just as well say, instead of all that palaver about being Buddha, that if you just practise those steps you will end up by attaining Buddhahood. You have to come back to practice in the end, anyway. But, meanwhile, if you are not careful, you bemuse yourself with this talk about Buddhahood being actually there and you not knowing that you are a Buddha - thinking that you are not a Buddha. And you do not experience your not being a Buddha; you experience that you are Devaraja. So if someone says, 'You can change Devaraja into a Buddha,' that sounds quite acceptable and a reasonable possibility; but if they start telling you that you are the Buddha, you lose your sense of present reality. You can become alienated, or sort of try to alienate yourself.

Devaraja: Try to lift yourself out of being Devaraja into being - S: Yes, (you try to) lift yourself up by your Devaraja bootstraps into this state of being Buddha. This is what some of these wretched Zen monks are trying to do; and sometimes they do create such an incredible tension that something explodes and maybe they do get a glimpse of their Buddha-nature. But it seems to be rather like burning down the house in order to get roast pig.

Devaraja: It's very unreal.

S: This is where the simple, direct, everyday language of early Buddhism is very much to the point.

: I find that, on a lower level, for instance, I think to myself that I must have positive emotions, and it seems to solidify things considerably and make it difficult to do that; but if I concentrate without [226] adopting a negative attitude of mind, and (try) removing fear and ...s and cankers and so forth, that leaves things much more open to act spontaneously in a more fluid way.

S: Yes. Because, if you start from the assumption that you are Buddha, but you don't know it and don't realize it - that everything that you think or know you are is not your true nature -

you have to take a negative attitude towards it and try to get rid of it, instead of developing it. If you are really the Buddha and not Devaraja, Devaraja is actually just a great big mistake, and the sooner you get rid of him the better. But you don't actually feel like that. But if you are told you can change things, that is much more acceptable and intelligible.

There was a lot of this sort of pseudo-Vedantic language, considerably diluted, around in pseudo-spiritual circles. That 'You are really just That; you just have to open your eyes and realize that you are really Buddha, or Christ, or God.'

Devaraja: And all those pseudo-religious circles have a tremendous feel of unreality about them. People seem totally unreal, ...

S: Because it becomes just a mental idea that you are this, that and the other. And virtually, if you take it seriously, in the end it just becomes an addition to your so-called ego; it becomes a bit of finery with which you adorn your ego, that you are Buddha. Well, that means the ego is Buddha. So you end up by deifying the ego, actually.

The Buddhist position is midway between the pseudo-spiritual Vedantic view and the Christian view. The Christian says that you are a miserable sinner; you are bad, you are evil, you are wicked, you are damned. The Vedantic view says that you are God, you are Brahma, you are Buddha. But the Buddhist says that you are neither particularly good nor particularly bad; you are just a raw material which can be gradually changed into something quite noble and even into something Enlightened. That is the Buddhist view.

Devaraja: It seems that it is almost alchemical language ...

S: Right!

Devaraja: - and particularly from what I have read of the Vajrayana, the Vajrayana tends to use more that language of transforming.

S: It does, but it also uses the language of identity, sometimes; though always within the practical context of sadhana.

ABC: This point about the danger of the reification of sunyata: is that connected with the point of mahasunyata, the emptiness of emptiness?

S: Yes, one could say that: that the concept of emptiness is itself empty. This means don't take even the concept of sunyata seriously. It is what Guenther quite rightly terms an operational concept. Can you see what he means by that? It is a concept which is used for practical working purposes. It is not to be taken as having ultimate validity. He points out, very rightly - this is one of the good features of all his work - that all the Buddhist so-called terms, concepts and doctrines [227] are operational concepts; they are not to be taken literally - not to be reified, in other words. He constantly insists upon this, and very rightly. He is the declared enemy of everything ontological. He sometimes rather goes to town, but he is basically very right, and the anti-ontological emphasis is necessary. It keeps everything fluid. It breaks up all the conceptual solidity.

Nagarjuna's exact words - I remember them now - are: 'It is better to have the concept of the

Atman as high as Mount Meru than to be attached to the doctrine of sunyata.' That is what he actually says. And, as far as I remember, it is in the Prajnaparamitasastra, of which there is a French translation, though not an English one.

Devaraja: '...than become attached to the sunyata'?

S: '...to the doctrine of sunyata' or 'teaching of sunyata' or 'concept of sunyata'. I don't remember the exact wording, but that is what he said.

To come back to this analogy of you being potentially the driver of a motor car: if you are deeply convinced of this, you can just sit down and try to uncover your knowledge of how to drive by sheer effort of will, without actually taking any steps to learn to drive. So, in the same way, if you are told, say, by a Zen teacher, that you are Buddha, you sit down and try to strain, sweat and struggle to see that you are Buddha, instead of taking the necessary practical steps that will enable you to become Buddha.

Devaraja: Yes. This bears out very much what you said in the Survey about the Insight of Enlightenment is an insight into the conditioned, but it is not the creation of a generalized, abstract concept with which one tries to unite oneself, thereby creating a mental prison inside the prison of the senses.

S: Yes, right. That is true, it does tie up.

Devaraja: This bears out my personal thoughts: often I hear people say, 'So-and-so has a talent for such-and-such', which I think really is a mistake because it is assuming that they have some sort of inherent thing ...

S: - that it's there.

Devaraja: - there. Rather like the 'You're a Buddha already' kind of thing. I remember something which really helped me at the time, which was actually said by one of the Beatles. He said, 'There is no such thing as talent, you know; there's just this determination to do something.'

S: Ah, I think you have to be careful not to go to the other extreme, because it is also true that you can't, as the English proverb says, get a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and also that you can't polish a tile until it becomes a mirror. Otherwise it suggests that, if you just put in the amount of effort, you can become absolutely anything, which probably is not quite correct.

Devaraja: But if you have the will to do it, and -

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S: Can you make yourself an artist by force of will?

Devaraja: I think if you've got this kind of urge, then you can. I think people confuse talent with this urge in a particular area; and I think, if you've got that urge, you can do it.

S: But if you've got the urge, it comes back to the same thing.

Devaraja: Yes, but it's not talent. It's not some kind of inherent artistic ability ...

S: I think you are really saying the same thing in another way, because I think that sort of urge is itself the talent.

Devaraja: Ah, that's different from saying talent, because I think people use 'talent' as some kind of - you know, it's just a particular kind of urge, which is a different thing.

Subhuti: I'm not sure whether that's true. I think that talent is a certain set of preconditioned factors. You have, say, arms and legs which give you aptitudes in certain directions, and some people have, (say,) physiological or environmental conditionings which give them aptitudes in certain directions.

Devaraja: But those are conditionings. They aren't something almost primordial and inherent.

ABC: But it might have been built up over several lifetimes.

Devaraja: That may be so, but they are still conditionings. They are not some sort of inherent quality. It's a result of their previous conditionings.

: You are suggesting that if something can't be put out there in a concrete form - in solid form - therefore it can't exist.

Devaraja: I'm sorry, I don't understand.

: You are suggesting there is no such thing as talent because it's sort of a not-thing; but it can still exist, even though it isn't a thing.

Devaraja: What I am suggesting is that maybe the word talent is misused and misunderstood; that there's just an urge in a particular direction, aided by particular conditionings, but there's not some inherent kind of quality, that you can't reduce it beyond that quality; you can't say ...

S: I think the analogy in this field is with something a bit different. It would be rather with someone who was considered, as apparently some people were around the end of the last century and the beginning of this, a 'great artist', because they have tremendous talent, but they never actually do anything. For years and years their friends all go on believing, 'He's got a tremendous talent; he's a real genius, a great artist.' But he doesn't produce anything at all. And maybe towards the end of [229] his life his friends say; 'A great pity. He was a great artist, but he never actually got around to doing anything.' I think the analogy is more like that. Whereas, had he been a great artist, he would have done something.

Devaraja: That urge would have been there; it would have ...

S: The urge would have been there, yes.

Devaraja: I think that many people find that a limitation, because when I applied that to some extent to myself, in a way I broke through a lot of personal limitations.

S: But, at the same time, I don't think it can be said that anybody could become an artist by

taking pains.

Sona: We seem to have come back to the potentiality of a person again, you know, if he has the urge.

S: It is not a sort of entity, but a sort of basic structure of the psyche, as it were.

Sagaramati: The disposition.

S: Disposition.

Devaraja: But that's a product of conditioning, surely, from previous lives and from this life. If one grows up in an artistic environment, one tends to move in that direction to express oneself.

Sagaramati: But are you saying that people are saying there's something outside conditionings?

Devaraja: Yes, I feel that's what people do say. I feel that's the attitude that people have, and that that often limits and ties us, and prevents us from just breaking open whole new areas.

: I agree with what you say about the limitations of the use of the word 'talent', but I think there is a certain something that is referred to by 'talent', which is genuinely there. Because if you take what you say literally, that means anybody could become anything they want - i.e. any given person could become an artist, or a sportsman, or a political leader, or anything, just according to how much effort they made. That rather suggests that everybody is exactly the same.

Devaraja: No, I don't think it does. But I think there's a value in adopting that sort of attitude, certainly to some extent, because ...

S: It would land you in logical difficulties if you took it literally, because in that case everybody would potentially have every talent, and then the question would arise, 'Which one should they actually develop?' because they wouldn't have time to develop them all if one and the same person was potentially, in the sense of able to be, painter, sculptor, actor, musician, designer, politician, Don Juan, etc., etc. So in a way we are back where we started.

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Subhuti: Sure. That is dangerous. In fact, Kevin Brooks used to - I don't know whether he still does - find himself very much hampered by that way of looking at it. He felt or thought that he could be anything, he could express himself artistically in any direction he wanted to. The trouble was, which to choose? He was trying to work it out pragmatically: that drawing was cheaper than sculpture, and that sort of thing. (Laughter.) He ended up not doing anything, and I think that's still where he's at. Whereas I think you probably work with - you just work, and develop that.

Sona: If everyone has got a talent, then as Buddhists the one to choose is the talent to realize the Buddha-nature, to be Enlightened.

ABC: And use the conditioning you've got.

Devaraja: Yes, obviously, in terms of its practical application, one has to choose a particular direction. But that's the demands of time, you know, and the number of pounds one has. Personally, I have found it quite helpful in removing quite a lot of self-imposed limitations in the past.

Sona: Perhaps what one ought to do is look at what one is trying to do first of all, and then (follow) anything that's helpful, any sort of urges you have in certain directions, but keeping the goal always ahead of you.

S: You have to have, as it were, one major urge, to which all the others - I won't say are subordinated, but around which they are all integrated and organized; one master impulse. If you think as a Buddhist in the widest and deepest sense, you take your ultimate aim as Enlightenment and you try to harmonize all your talents and interests and abilities around that ultimate objective.

Sona: Some people seem to get caught up with these other urges and lose sight of what they are really trying to do ...

S: And also we can't strictly regard all these talents as intermediate stages, because you can go to Enlightenment and be a Buddha without having exercised any talent, in the ordinary sense, at all - being technically a quite ungifted and untalented person. But you can be Enlightened, just as Sariputra was Enlightened without all those psychic powers which Moggallana happened to have.

It also occurs to me to say that you start thinking - this is going off at a slight tangent from what you said - in terms of having a talent which is there, though you are not able to do anything about it, only when you are not actually exercising any talent. In other words, you only start thinking about doing, and reifying your concept of doing, when you are actually not doing. (Voices: Mm.) Whether to exercise this talent or that talent or be this or be that is only a problem for the person who is at a standstill. If you are actually an artist and into the arts, you never think about these things.

Sona: I've often thought about that and realized that I don't seem to have any gifts at all; I can't write very well, I can't -

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S: It means that you yourself are just one great big gift; you yourself are a gift to the world, as it were, a gift to your friends (smiling). You don't have any gift, you are a gift.

Sona: Quite often I waste a lot of time thinking about the different things and that maybe I ought to go and read a few books on this or on that; and, as you say, (I am) at a standstill really. When you are doing something, you just do it, without thinking.

Devaraja: It is quite interesting. I have noticed that when I am really doing something, like painting or drawing, I'm really into it. Then somebody comes along and says, 'Ah, you've really got a talent'. It almost seems superfluous, that comment; it's almost like ...

S: It's like when you are enjoying a good meal and someone comes along and says, 'Wow, you've got a talent for eating!'

One can even generalize and say that we begin to doubt only when we are not doing. If you're wondering whether you should be an artist or whether you are an artist, you're not. If you have to wonder about it, you are just not that.

ABC: It's a bit the same when you're trying to concentrate, when your mind is clear and you are disturbed, and then if you concentrate on that disturbance it manifests into a doubt of a fear of something, and you put your energy into that.

Sona: At the same time, one should perhaps try to stretch oneself. (This word is being bandied around quite a bit: stretching yourself.) I get the feeling of being able to do other things that (I) normally find quite difficult. I was wondering if one could apply that to art; would there be any value in that?

S: I think there has to be a distinction between general human capacity and specific human capacities. If you are not exercising all your capacities as a human being, then you should stretch yourself a bit and exercise them. But you shouldn't bother yourself trying to be specific things which are not part of a general all-round human equipment, just because other people are doing those particular things. There is an infinity of things that you could be doing, which some other people are doing in all cases. Some of our Friends do bother themselves - 'Maybe I should take up painting, or sculpture, or embroidery, or Zen, or archery.' There are hundreds of things, all of which you, in a sense, could do; but you usually worry in that way when you are not actually doing anything, or not very much.

ABC: You also worry about other people, sometimes.

S: That's true, yes.

ABC: If you're doing nothing, you think that you should be doing something.

S: Especially if you're happily doing nothing.

ABC: Yeah, right! (Loud laughter.)

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S: So it is quite good to insist on being an unspecialized human being. You could say that the specialist, to the extent that he is a specialist, is a bit lopsided. Just be an unspecialized human being, or, if you like to put it paradoxically, specialize in being an unspecialized human being - not an artist, a sculptor, an embroiderer, an archer; not even a great lover; just a straightforward human being. It would be a good idea just to have a few of those around.

Devaraja: They are always useful.

: I remember a reference to Devaraja's - er - scrawls, when we were doing our poetry and English classes, and it sometimes happened that (something) was said to be absolutely lovely and terrific, and I thought it was dreadful. And I wondered whether there wasn't some magical thing called poetry which I was completely unaware of, and just didn't have any idea about.

That worried me for a bit.

S: It could be. Some people have no ear for music. But so what? You can be a complete human being, regardless. Vajrabodhi told me a couple of weeks ago that he had no ear for music whatever, and could not distinguish even the simplest of tunes from another tune. He said that to him it was all just noise. We talked about this, because there is no doubt he isn't lacking in emotion. I told him the case of Dr Johnson, who was similarly constituted. Johnson had no ear for music and could not distinguish one tune from another. He said once, I think, that he could not tell 'God Save the King' from 'Pop Goes the Weasel', and that music to him was just noise. But he was a man of strong emotion and quite a great poet, who responded strongly to poetry. So it was certainly not due to any deficiency in his emotional life. It could have been just a technical, almost a physiological, deficiency.

So if one doesn't respond to the arts, there isn't necessarily something wrong with you, provided your emotional life is healthy and unobstructed. What about the people who lived before there was any such thing as music and poetry? You could even go so far as to regard these specialized activities in the same way as the ancient Egyptians regarded the ancient Greek gymnastics: that, if you were a completely healthy, balanced human being, just as (they thought) you would not need gymnasia, you would not need a specific thing called poetry or a specific thing called art. You could argue in this way; though probably there is much to be said on the other side as well. But you could perhaps make out a quite plausible case for the really healthy, balanced person not needing any of these things.

I say this partly because some of our Friends have been made to feel almost guilty because they were not into one or other of the arts and had apparently no talents; which is the case, probably, with the vast majority of human beings.

Sagaramati: I think the key word in that is 'awareness'. It's almost like ... because you're not an artist you can't see. Obviously they believe you're not aware of certain distinctions with your eyes, and things like that, because you're not into graphics and so on.

Devaraja: Mind you, it's quite interesting watching somebody draw. I had this experience with ... and the training that one does get at art school; you really do learn to observe more, just on the simple level of the [233] structures of things. It is quite interesting to watch somebody who may be starting to draw for the first time and how they don't really just even perceive the simple structure of something, and how it's put together. So there is a kind of ...

Colin: I think that can work the other way as well, where somebody substitutes what they've been taught for actually looking, and they're still not looking. It's just that they're going about it in a more systematic way, but they're still not looking.

Devaraja: That's true. I agree, that is sort of looking in a deeper sense, but I still think there is a value in - if you really look at something you can see the structure of it.

S: You can learn to look and possibly, if you go to art school and learn in the right way, it does heighten your power of observation, but not that you can't improve your looking unless you do it in that particular way.

Devaraja: Oh, yes.

S: We have come a long way from our text, but probably quite usefully.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now the venerable Ananda, rising at eventide from his solitude, went to the Exalted One ... and said this: 'It is marvellous, Sir! It is a wonder, sir! how short-lived was the Exalted One's mother. When the Exalted One was seven days born, the Exalted One's mother made an end and was reborn in the company of the Tusita devas.'

'It is even so, Ananda! Short-lived are the mothers of Bodhisattvas. When the Bodhisattvas are seven days born, their mothers make an end and are reborn in the company of the Tusita devas.'

Then the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Seeing all creatures that shall come to be, And all that, leaving body, shall depart. Seeing all that, the noblemen by birth Would ardently pursue the Brahma-life."

S: It doesn't give a very close connection between the episode and the udana. It is quite interesting to see what is happening in the episode. I think this is the first time the word Bodhisattva has been mentioned, isn't it? (Murmurs of assent.) And here it simply means a future Buddha. But you see, we can say that this little episode represents the beginnings [234] of the growth of the legend, as it were, of the Buddha. You see, the life of the Buddha is being regarded as a pattern or a sort of norm for all Buddhas. Ananda asks the Buddha why it was that his mother died seven days after he was born, and the Buddha says that the mothers of Bodhisattvas, the mothers of future Buddhas, always die seven days after the birth of the Bodhisattva. But that is really no answer at all, is it, strictly speaking? It is like saying, 'Why does an apple fall from a tree?' and being told, 'Well, apples always fall from trees.' It is no answer at all, really; but then what else can you say? The real answer is, as it were, 'Well, she just died after seven days.' But the Buddha's life is regarded at the beginning as a sort of pattern, an embodiment of the Ideal, and even the accidents of his life came to be regarded eventually as part of the pattern. You see this especially in the later Theravada works, where there is mention of the previous Buddhas. Every Buddha has a particular tree under which he is enlightened. Every Buddha has two chief disciples. Every Buddha has so many chief lay disciples. And so on. The pattern is exactly the same as in the life of the human and historical Buddha Gautama or Sakyamuni; only the names differ. So in this way the life of the Buddha becomes a sort of norm or pattern in its accidents as well as in its essential features, and in this way the Buddha legend develops, in its earlier Theravada or Hinayana form. But you could say that, even though a Buddha always embodies the same spiritual ideal, why should every Buddha always have two chief disciples? There seems to be no reason behind that. A Buddha might conceivably have ten chief disciples, or two, or one, or none.

So the fact that the accidents of the Buddha's career are made part of the general or universal pattern should not be taken too seriously. It is simply meant to reinforce the universality of the Ideal. This is how it should be taken.

I remember an instance of much the same sort of thing, in slightly different circumstances. This is a story I heard from Venerable Sangharatana during his days at Sarnath. One day they

had a visit from Vinoba Bhave. Have you heard of Vinoba Bhave? He is very famous in India. I think he is dead now, but he was the chief of Mahatma Gandhi's disciples on the practical side - not the political disciples but the constructive workers, as they were called. It was he who started the bhudan movement - the voluntary gift of land. He went all round India collecting land from wealthy landowners and distributing it among the landless peasants, especially among the Untouchables. He did quite a lot of work in this way. But he was a very odd character, very eccentric and whimsical and so on. He was well known to several friends of mine and I used to hear a lot about him, but this story I heard from Sangharatana. He had various peculiarities, as many of the Gandhians of that sort did; they were really crazy people in some ways. What happened was this. He was staying in the big dharmasala at Sarnath, and the evening before his departure Venerable Sangharatana asked his followers what he would like for breakfast. They said he would like some freshly sprouted grams. He must have them exactly at seven o'clock in the morning, and he would not take them if they were offered at any other time, even a minute late. So Sangharatana, who is very conscientious, got up early that morning and got the grams ready himself, and himself took them over to make sure that Vinoba Bhave got them exactly on time. So he arrived at the dharmasala at two minutes to seven with these sprouted grams, and found that Vinoba Bhave and his party had already left and gone to the temple, which was a few dozen [235] yards away. So he left the grams in the dharmasala and went flying off to the temple - you can just imagine it! - and found them all there and said to the disciples of Vinoba Bhave, 'I have just been to the dharmasala. The grams are already there. I brought them exactly as you said, so he could come back to the dharmasala and eat them before his departure.' But the disciples said, 'Oh no, he is going to leave straight from the temple.' So Sangharatana got a bit annoyed and said, 'I brought the grams in time. You said (he) wanted them at exactly seven o'clock. Why can't he come back to the temple?' The disciples said, 'He never goes back anywhere.' Sangharatana said, 'Oh, why is that?' and they said, 'Ah, that is his greatness!' Sangharatana was so annoyed he felt like telling them what they could do with his greatness, but he thought better of it, and he went running back to the dharmasala and back again to the temple with those grams, and in the end Vinoba Bhave apparently did take just a few before going off. But he had a rigid pattern, you see: the great man behaves in this sort of way, as it were. Sangharatana told me this a few weeks later when I arrived at Sarnath, and he was still feeling quite indignant about it.

The moral is that you have to be careful about thinking that a certain type of person, say a spiritual personality or ideal person like the Buddha, always behaves 'like this', and therefore everybody else has to behave like that too. That is all right as regards the essentials, but not the accidentals of his life. It is the distinction between being inspired by somebody and trying to apply the same principles that they are applying, and just copying them in unimportant, insignificant, quite accidental details.

Devaraja: Like people imitating your style of speaking!

S: Do they?! I hadn't noticed it myself - but maybe they do.

Sona: Sort of Bhante-itis.

: That is the first thing I noticed when I started coming.

S: Oh, is it? Oh, that is quite interesting. Had you seen me then?

: I had seen you a few times, yes, and heard some of your past lectures.

S: You heard me on tape.

Any other query about that? You also notice how Ananda wonders about things. Presumably he ought to be meditating, but he is wondering about why the mother had died seven days after (the Buddha's) birth. It could be that the Buddha was just putting him off gently, and saying, 'It is always like that, Ananda: the mothers of Bodhisattvas always die seven days after their birth.' And presumably, after that, everybody took it quite literally. So it isn't really a reply at all. I often think that sometimes the irony of some of the Buddha's statements is missed. There is quite a lot of irony in the Pali Canon. Sometimes it is fairly obvious, but at other times it is quite subtle. I think there may be a touch of irony here; perhaps Ananda did ask this question and the Buddha actually replied in this way, but it was with irony, to put Ananda off, as it were, or to suggest that it wasn't very important; the question didn't merit a real answer.

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What about the verse?

Seeing all creatures that shall come to be, And all that, leaving body, shall depart, Seeing all that, the noblemen by birth Would ardently pursue the Brahma-life.

- that is to say, the contemplation of impermanence is an incentive to the living of the spiritual life.

Devaraja: If the Buddha was being ironical, that would be like a little redirecting of Ananda's attention.

S: Yes, to more fundamental things. After all, whether it is after seven days or seven years or seventy years, what is the difference? Everybody dies in the end. It is that general fact or principle that has to be reflected on; not wondering why it was after seven days rather than after seventy days.

It says 'the noblemen by birth' - presumably those of good family. Ananda, like the Buddha himself, of course, comes from a kshatriya family. Perhaps there is a slight reference to that there.

It draws attention to the general danger of the rigid pattern, the pattern being a repetition of something which is good in itself, as it were. Really, this repetition of the pattern is the negation of the individual. You could even say that the repetition of the individual is the negation of the individual, in the sense of the negation of other individualities.

ABC: It ruins your intuition.

S: Well, it limits the possibilities of growth. For instance, there might be someone who is really quite Enlightened, and you want to find out or to reflect on whether he is a Buddha; and then you inquire whether his mother died seven days after he was born. 'Oh no, she didn't; she's still alive, in fact.' 'Well, he can't be a Buddha!' Do you see what I mean? If he was a Buddha his mother would have died seven days after he was born, because mothers of

Buddhas-to-be always die seven days after their sons are born. So you get caught in a sort of net.

Devaraja: You might get a situation where people start trying to enforce that pattern, and ensure that their mothers die seven days after they are born! (Laughter.)

S: Yes, or falsifying their birth certificates!

It is also connected with the danger of creating any rigid pattern for a centre. We might have one pattern, say, at Archway, that being the first centre, but it doesn't necessarily follow that we should have the same pattern everywhere. The same principle everywhere, and the same basic inspiration, but the patterns can be very different.

: The same enthusiasm.

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"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding Ground.

Now on that occasion there was in Rajagaha a leper named Suppabuddha, a poor, miserable, wretched creature. And it happened at that time that the Exalted One was sitting in the midst of a great multitude teaching dhamma.

And Suppabuddha, the leper, saw from afar that multitude gathered together, and at the sight he thought: Doubtless an almsgiving of food, both hard and soft, is toward yonder. Suppose I draw near to yonder crowd. I might get here somewhat to eat, food soft or hard."

S: The language of the translation here is really archaic and stiff; the original isn't at all like that.

"So Suppabuddha, the leper, drew near that crowd, and he beheld the Exalted One sitting there amid a great multitude, teaching dhamma, and seeing it he thought: No! There is no alms-giving here of food, hard or soft. This is Gotama the recluse teaching dhamma in the assembly. Suppose I listen to dhamma.

So he sat down at one side, thinking: I too will listen to dhamma.

Now the Exalted One, grasping with his mind the thoughts of all that assembly, said to himself: Who, I wonder, of those present is of growth to understand dhamma? And the Exalted One saw Suppabuddha, the leper, sitting in that assembly, and at the sight he thought: This one here is of growth to understand dhamma. So for the sake of Suppabuddha, the leper, he gave a talk dealing in due order with these topics: on alms-giving, virtue, the heaven world, of the danger, meanness and corruption of sense-desires, and the profit of getting free of them.

And when the Exalted One knew that the heart of Suppabuddha, the leper, was ready, softened, unbiassed, elated and believing, then he unfolded those dhamma teachings which the awakened ones have themselves discovered, namely: Ill, arising, ending, the Way.

Then just as a white cloth, free from stains, is ready to receive the dye, even so in Suppabuddha, the leper, as he sat there in that very seat, arose the pure, stainless dhamma-sight, the knowledge that whatsoever is of a nature to arise, that also is of a nature to end. And Suppabuddha, the leper, saw dhamma, reached dhamma, understood dhamma, plunged into dhamma, crossed [238] beyond doubting, was free from all questionings, won confidence, and needing none other in the Master's message, rose from his seat, advanced to the Exalted One and on reaching him saluted the Exalted One and sat down at one side. As he sat thus, Suppabuddha, the leper, exclaimed to the Exalted One, 'Excellent, sir! Excellent, sir! Just as if, sir, one should lift up the fallen, discover the hidden, point out the way to one bewildered, show a light in the gloom, saying, "Now they that have eyes to see can see shapes," even so in divers ways has the Exalted One expounded dhamma. I, even I, sir, do go for refuge to the Exalted One, to dhamma and the order of monks. May the Exalted One accept me as a follower, as one who from this time forth even to life's end takes refuge in him.'

Thereupon Suppabuddha, the leper, after being taught, established, roused and made happy by the Exalted One's talk according to dhamma, delighted with what was said, returned thanks, rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side and went away.

Now a young calf rushed upon Suppabuddha, the leper, and caused his death.

Then a great number of monks went to the Exalted One ... and said: 'Sir, that leper named Suppabuddha, after being taught, established, roused and made happy by the Exalted One's talk according to dhamma, has met his end. Pray, what is his bourn? What is his future lot?'

'Monks, Suppabuddha, the leper, was a sage. He lived his life according to dhamma. He vexed me not with questionings about dhamma. Suppabuddha, the leper, monks, by breaking three fetters is a stream-winner, one not doomed; he is assured, he is bound for enlightenment.

At these words a certain monk said this to the Exalted One: 'Pray, sir, what is the reason, what is the cause why Suppabuddha, the leper, was a poor, mean, miserable creature?'

'Once upon a time, monk, Suppabuddha, the leper, was a rich man's son in this same Rajagaha. One day, walking through a garden, he saw Tagara-sikkhi, a Pacceka Buddha, entering the town for alms-food. On seeing him he thought: Who is this leper roaming about? and spitting and turning his left side to him went away.

By the ripening of that deed, for many years, for many a hundred, many a thousand, many a hundred thousand years he suffered torment in purgatory. By the further ripening of that deed in this same Rajagaha he was a poor, mean, miserable creature. But on coming to the dhamma-discipline set forth by the Wayfarer, he took upon him faith, took upon him virtue, took upon him the teaching heard, took upon him abandoning, took [239] upon him wisdom. So doing, when body broke up, after death, he rose up in the happy bourn, in the heaven world, in a company of the Devas of the Thirty-Three. There he outshines the other devas in beauty and fame.'

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

As a man with eyes avoids pitfalls with all his might, So in the world the sage should evil things avoid."

S: There are several points to comment on here. First of all, Suppabuddha's original motive. Do you notice that?

: He wanted food.

S: Mm. The Buddha by this time was very popular and he was teaching a great multitude in the Bamboo Grove, apparently, so Suppabuddha the leper from a distance saw this great crowd of people, and thought that there was an almsgiving going on - that some rich man was giving away food to all and sundry. So he thought that if he approached he could get some food. But, as he drew nearer, he saw that it was not an almsgiving, it was Gautama the Buddha delivering a discourse, teaching the Dharma. So he decided to stay and listen. We often find this happening: people's motives change. They originally come along for comparatively mundane reasons, but they stay, gradually, for other reasons.

You notice here that the Buddha is giving, as it were, set discourses. We haven't really come across this before. It's a sort of public lecture. There was that more systematic teaching given to Meghiya, but that apparently was given just to Meghiya. But here the Buddha is delivering what the texts often represent as a sort of set discourse: a discourse on 'almsgiving, virtue, the heaven world, of the danger, meanness and corruption of sense-desires, and the profit of getting free of them', and then the Four Noble Truths. This is a very common resume of topics or headings under which the Buddha spoke, in that order. I think this is the first time we find the Buddha in the Udana giving a sort of public discourse in this way to a large crowd of people. But even in the midst of that public meeting, almost, the Buddha is singling out the individual. He is looking around, trying to see who would really benefit from a full exposition of the teaching. If he sees that there is nobody who can benefit from the complete teaching, he usually stops short. He either talks about simply almsgiving and the heaven world, or more limited topics; but if he sees that there is someone much more receptive, he goes on to speak about the 'meanness and corruption of sense-desires, and the profit of getting free of them', and then sets forth the Four Noble Truths, as on this occasion. But he doesn't always do that, depending on the nature of the audience.

As far as we know, the Buddha was the first teacher in India to give what might be called public discourses or public lectures, as distinct from answering the questions of individual inquirers and talking to them individually. We are also told that the Buddha frequently stood up to speak, instead of sitting, as was the custom before that. We are so used to things like public lectures, we don't realize that at one time they were an absolute innovation. So far as India is concerned, it seems to [240] have been the Buddha who first adopted the practice of speaking about the Dharma, about spiritual things, to large numbers of people at the same time, by way of a set discourse under certain headings, certain leading topics. You don't find anything of that sort in Indian literature before the Buddha. You might even say that the Buddha invented the lecture, or even the sermon. Where else in the world do you get this, before that time? Confucius gave no lectures; they are only sayings. The Greeks had speeches, but they were all political. That is why the sutta came to be regarded as the classic form of the Buddhist text, the Buddhist scripture: a discourse by the Buddha. At the same time, we must not overlook the fact that, originally and even throughout his career, he just taught in short sayings - responses to questions put by individuals. Some of the later suttas, of course, are not

really actual reports of discourses by the Buddha, but a stringing together of his teaching on various topics, and even an expansion, in some cases, so as to make up a sort of discourse which was then attributed to him as a whole in that form. A lot of the suttas in the Pali Canon are clearly made up in this way.

: There is the quite specific mention of Going for Refuge...

S: Yes, this is the first time, isn't it? It hasn't come before. It is in response to the tremendous impact of the teaching, as a result of which he has become a Stream Entrant on the spot. And you notice the similes: 'just as a white cloth, free from stains, is ready to receive the dye, even so in Suppabuddha, the leper, as he sat there in that very seat, arose the pure, stainless dhamma-sight' - literally, dhamma-eye, dhamma-cakkhun. '... And Suppabuddha, the leper, saw dhamma, reached dhamma, understood dhamma, plunged into dhamma, crossed beyond doubting, was free from all questionings, won confidence, and needing none other in the Master's message' - 'needing none other': aparappaccaya, not depending upon another, depending only upon himself, upon his own understanding, not having to take it at second hand from another person. You will again notice the similes which often recur: "Just as if, sir, one should lift up the fallen, discover the hidden, point out the way to one bewildered, show a light in the gloom". That is how he feels. He feels as though he had fallen and has now been lifted up. He feels that something that had been hidden from him has been discovered. He feels that he now has a definite way to follow, that he sees the light, as it were. In other words, it has all been a revelation to him and has had a tremendous effect on him, and in consequence he Goes for Refuge.

Isn't this the first time, also, that there is a reference to a Pacceka Buddha? (Murmurs of assent.) This is a very vexed question: no one really knows what a Pacceka Buddha is. In later times, there was an attempt to classify the different kinds of Buddha. Pacceka Buddha meant, literally, just an individual or private Buddha, one who was Enlightened by and for himself alone. I think the nub of the difficulty is the fact that, by the time this doctrine of different kinds of Buddhas was systematized, the word 'buddha' had changed its meaning. Originally it was used very loosely, simply in the sense of a wise man, so I think that originally the term Pacceka Buddha simply meant someone like a Rishi: a wise man living alone, all by himself, without a teacher and without disciples; but not a Buddha or Enlightened One in the full, later Buddhist sense. In a way, a private or solitary Buddha is a contradiction in terms, but [241] since the early Buddhists had no idea about historical development or doctrinal development, they took the 'Buddha' in Pacceka Buddha quite literally in this later sense of 'completely Enlightened One'. So, therefore, they had to try to explain what a completely Enlightened One was doing leading a solitary life, and that was very difficult; in fact, they could never do it. I think, looking at it in terms of historical development, we can say that the Pacceka Buddha was simply the pre-Buddhist solitary wise man, but not an Enlightened One in the sense of one who had attained complete liberation or samyak-sambodhi.

There is much the same sort of thing with regard to the Refuges. You notice Suppabuddha Goes for Refuge to the 'dhamma and the order of monks' - the bhikkhu sangha. If you take 'bhikkhu' in the later, coenobitical sense, you narrow the Refuge. 'Bhikkhu' is used here, clearly, at this early stage, simply in the sense of someone who follows the Ideal; as in the Dhammapada, where 'bhikkhu' is equated with brahman and also with sraman, and where it is said that, even though one lives at home and even though one is well clad and richly ornamented, if there is truth and righteousness in you, then you are a brahmana, a sramana

and a bhikkhu. So 'bhikkhu' is not used here in the sense of a monk in the later technical, narrow sense, but simply in the sense of all true, all worthy disciples of the Buddha, the real followers.

Sona: I get a little confused about the term 'Sangha'. Sometimes it is said that 'Sangha' means those who have entered the Stream; is that right?

S: That's Aryasangha. There was a bit of correspondence about this in Shabda, wasn't there, between Ananda and Vajrabodhi? Ananda seemed to go to one extreme and Vajrabodhi to the other. The truth lies in between. Did anyone notice this, or was anyone puzzled by that correspondence? Ananda, as far as I remember, said something to the effect that one Went for Refuge to the community of all Buddhists, and Vajrabodhi wrote back to say No, the Sangha meant the Aryasangha. So Ananda made it too wide and Vajrabodhi made it too narrow.

ABC: What is the guideline?

S: In the case of the Going for Refuge, one does Go for Refuge to the Aryasangha in the sense of the real, true followers, especially those who are well on the way to Enlightenment, Stream Entrants and so on. But this is not to be identified with the bhikkhu sangha, because some of the members of the Aryasangha may be ordinary lay people. So Vajrabodhi suggested or implied, as far as I remember, that the Aryasangha excluded the Mahasangha; whereas actually they overlap. So when you are Going for Refuge, you are Going for Refuge with the Sangha of those who are really and truly followers of the Buddha, not just the 'ecclesiastical' group.

I think Ananda said something like: 'When we Go for Refuge, we Go for Refuge with the community of all our Buddhist brothers and sisters' which was much too wide. And Vajrabodhi responded by saying: 'No, it is to the Aryasangha,' which is true, for the Aryasangha may well include some of our ordinary Buddhist brothers and sisters; it doesn't automatically exclude them. You could have a situation, theoretically, in which none of those who are technically bhikkhus had become Aryas, and a number [242] of those who were technically lay people had become Aryas. In that case, you would be Going for Refuge to an Aryasangha consisting of lay people and not of monks. The monks (themselves) would be Going for Refuge to that Aryasangha consisting of lay people and not of monks. So that shows that you can't take 'ecclesiastical' technicalities too seriously; you have to concentrate on the spiritual realities of the situation. So, when you Go for Refuge to the Sangha, it is the Aryasangha in the sense of all true followers, especially those with higher spiritual experience, regardless of their 'ecclesiastical' status: those who are living at home or wandering; whether they have (spouses) and families or not. That is all irrelevant here. If they are on the higher spiritual Path, they make up the Aryasangha.

We shall come, after a few pages, to a rather interesting case of harem ladies who became Stream Entrants. We can have a little discussion about that. So those harem ladies were technically members of the Aryasangha, and therefore included in the Third Refuge - for monks, even. Un-Enlightened monks would be Going for Refuge to an Aryasangha which included harem ladies. So, as I say, one has to see the realities of the situation. (You) rather seem to like the idea of Going for Refuge to an Aryasangha including harem ladies!

Devaraja: I appreciate that - er - the ...

S: - the realities of the situation! (Laughter.)

Devaraja: Yes, but I appreciate, from another point of view - I can remember Kassapa's refusal to shake hands with women. I can imagine Kassapa ... the fact that he was Taking Refuge in a ...

S: Well, there is that possibility, for sure. Perhaps if it was an Enlightened lady, he wouldn't mind.

Devaraja: I don't know! I don't agree.

S: Well, we'll have to wait and see; try him out on some of our Enlightened ladies.

Devaraja: Well, again, it's this thing of limitations and not judging by the realities but by 'That's a woman, therefore I mustn't shake hands with her' - not by whether she is a spiritually developed woman and I can have a communication with her and so on.

S: Any other point? All right, then. The verse seems quite straightforward.

'As a man with eyes avoids pitfalls with all his might, So in the world the sage should evil things avoid.'

: This is an example of the mode of address changing. To begin with, (Suppabuddha) referred to (the Buddha) as 'Gotama the recluse' and later as 'the Exalted One'.

S: Ah, yes. 'Gotama the recluse' would be 'sramana Gotama'. It means that Gotama was just one of the sramanas, a particularly prominent sramana, [243] no more than that. He becomes 'Bhagavan' when (Suppabuddha) recognizes his spiritual attributes; he recognizes him as an embodiment of Enlightenment, as a teacher, or his teacher; as an object of Refuge.

: What does 'Suppabuddha' mean?

S: Wide awake. Or, with buddha here in the old original sense of just 'understanding, aware, awake'. It means fully awake, wide awake.

Devaraja: I'm surprised that people in ... there is confusion about the use of the word 'Buddha'. I mean ... in a story like this, it is obviously just one of the awake, wise, and so on. I can't understand how confusion with words like that in the ...

S: It is important for us to realize that there was no sense of development until quite recently in human history - that is, in the last century; it became really popularized only after Darwin's work in the sphere of biology - (no sense) that there was such a thing as historical development, which was not generally understood; and the idea that even language could develop and that words could change their meanings. This was understood within certain limited fields; for instance, Chinese scholars were well aware that Chinese characters occurring in the classics did not have the same meaning as they had, say, 1,000 years later during the Tang dynasty. They were well aware of that. But that was confined to scholars and, more or less, to that particular field. But this whole idea of doctrinal development and linguistic development - of terms and concepts changing their meaning - this, in any wide

sense, is quite modern and recent. (Remember) that, say, 150 years ago in this country, practically everybody took the Bible literally. They took the Genesis story literally and thought in terms of human history going back only to 4000 BC. It was only Lyell's work in geology which shook that (idea), before Darwin's work in biology. Darwin confirmed, very strongly, the general trend; because, especially in the sphere of religion, people took doctrine as something fixed and static.

You get an interesting example of this in the classification by the famous Chinese master, Chih-i, of the sutras. He couldn't conceive that there might have been a development of Buddhist doctrine over 1000 years, with different works produced at different periods, and different sutras appearing at different times. There was no historical perspective. He took it that all those texts must have been preached by the Buddha personally in the course of his lifetime, but he saw quite clearly, being a highly intelligent man, that there was a doctrinal development there, so he tried to work it out in terms of five periods of teaching of the historical Buddha himself: the Deer Park period, the Avatamsaka period, and so on. That certainly makes sense, except that that particular development took place not in the course of the Buddha's lifetime but over several hundred years. But he was on the right track.

For instance, if a traditional orthodox Buddhist scholar is reading a text which actually originated some 100 years after the Buddha, and it contains certain technical terms, as does occur in earlier texts; inasmuch as he doesn't distinguish them as early and late, he takes the term as meaning always the same thing. In other words, there is a tendency to read what are in fact later meanings back into the older and earlier texts, and so on. That is what has happened with this word buddha. It [244] did not, in the very early days, have this later, very specialized meaning.

The same with the word 'bhikkhu'. It is very important to remember that.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now at that time between Savatthi and Jeta grove a number of lads were tormenting fish. And the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, was entering Savatthi in quest of alms-food. Then the Exalted One saw those many lads tormenting fish between Jeta Grove and Savatthi. At the sight he went up to them and said, 'Are you afraid of pain, my lads? Do you dislike pain?'

'Yes, sir, we are afraid of pain. We dislike pain.'

Then the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

If ye are afraid of pain, if pain is hateful to you
Do not an evil deed openly or in secret. If ye
shall do an evil deed or do one now, There's no escape from pain, tho' ye spring up and flee."

S: This episode is not unlike two that we have had earlier, and the moral is not very different, either, though not exactly the same. Any query on this? This stock phrase that keeps coming up:

: ... 'robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe'. Is there an extra robe?

S: There is a third robe. The bhikkhu has three robes: one round the waist, one that goes over the shoulder, and there is a third robe which is often made double and with a large number of creases, which is used as a sort of blanket for covering at night, and when travelling it is folded up and slung over one shoulder. That is the third robe, ankati as it is called. So 'robing himself' means that he might have been going around the lodging just in his inner robe, the one round the waist. Monks often do that in India and Ceylon; within the vihara they just go around with the one robe round the waist, and a belt. But when they go out they put on the second robe over that, and sling the third robe over their shoulder; and, of course, take up their bowl if they are going out for alms.

: It seems to be quite a set pattern, a set routine, ...

S: Yes, because if no food is cooked where one is staying, obviously the fact that you have to go and get food determines the structure of a great part of your day. Don't forget that most of the people would have been engaged in agriculture, so if you went to a village you had to get to the houses before they had all gone out into the fields for the day. Usually in India, even now, people eat twice a day: once before [245] setting out to the fields and once after coming back. Therefore, the bhikkhu would have to get around the houses not so early that they hadn't yet cooked and not so late that they had all gone out to work. Therefore, the monk seems to have gone out about nine or ten o'clock, which is still the custom in south-east Asia.

: Have you been out to ask for alms yourself?

S: Oh yes, many a time, as described in my memoirs; please see, when available!

: Another thing I've been wondering about is 'seeing the meaning of it'. What is the original phrase?

S: I don't know. This comes at the end, doesn't it? It means seeing into the truth and reality of the situation; not the meaning of words, but the meaning of life, as it were. Perhaps I should look that up and see what it is. I suspect that the word is artha, or attha in Pali, which is meaning, or gain or purpose. But certainly it means seeing into the truth of the situation, and in consequence the udana arises quite spontaneously. I don't know where it comes for the first time whether there is a reference to the Pali.

: Occasionally, some of the vigour of the original pops through in spite of the translation. There is this "'Are you afraid of pain, my lads?'"

S: Yes, right. It was probably kumara in Pali: youths, lads, boys, young men. Also the modes of address sound very stereotyped in English, but they are quite natural in Pali.

: There is a particular kind of Indian way of telling a story, which is echoed slightly in the translation - with much repetition. Done by an English person it lacks vigour, but when an Indian tells a story in that way the repetitions become really enjoyable. It is accompanied by lots of gestures and facial expressions and emphases. In fact, we picked up some of those characteristics quite a lot ourselves when we became familiar with it.

S: By the way, in Pali there is no indirect speech. That also may contribute to the repetition of everything in reported utterance. There is only direct speech, no indirect speech. You can't,

for instance, say in Pali: 'He told me what to do.' You have to say: 'He said: "So-and-so."' Sometimes you get direct narration within direct narration within direct narration, especially in the Jatakas ... It gives the compositors a lot of trouble when the English translations have to be set up (in type); with single inverted commas within double inverted commas within single inverted commas within double inverted commas. You lose track, if you are not careful, of who is actually speaking. I think you get this in the Arabian Nights, too, don't you?

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"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Savatthi, in East Park at the storeyed house of Migara's mother.

Now at that time the Exalted One was seated surrounded by a great number of monks on a day when it was the sabbath.

Then the venerable Ananda, when the night was far spent, when the first watch of the night was waning, rose from his seat and putting his robe over one shoulder, raising his folded hands towards the Exalted One, said this:

'Sir, the night is far spent. The first watch is waning. The order of monks has long been seated. Sir, let the Exalted One pronounce the obligations for the monks.'

At these words the Exalted One was silent. And a second time the venerable Ananda, in the middle watch (made the same request) and the Exalted One was still silent. Then a third time, as the night was far spent and the last watch of the night was waning, dawn being already at hand and the night wearing a face of gladness, the venerable Ananda rose from his seat, put his robe over one shoulder, and raising his folded hands towards the Exalted One, said, 'Sir, the night is far spent. The last watch is waning. The dawn is at hand. The night wears a face of gladness. The order of monks has long been seated. Sir, let the Exalted One pronounce the obligations for the monks.'

'Ananda, the company is not wholly pure.'

Thereupon it occurred to the venerable Moggallana the Great: Concerning which person did the Exalted One say the words, 'Ananda, the company is not wholly pure'? Thereupon the venerable Moggallana the Great, grasping it with his thought, fixed his attention on that entire company of monks. And the venerable Moggallana the Great perceived that person, one immoral, of a wicked nature, one impure, of a suspicious behaviour, one of covert deeds, one who was no recluse, though claiming to be such, no liver of the Brahma-life, though claiming to be such, one rotten within, one full of lusts, a rubbish-heap of filth, -sitting there amid the order of monks.

On beholding him he rose from his seat and went towards that person, and on coming to him said: 'Rise up, my good sir! You are seen by the Exalted One! There is no society for you with the monks!'

But that person was silent. Then a second and yet a third time the venerable Moggallana the Great repeated his words, and a third time that person was silent.

Then the venerable Moggallana the Great seized that person by the arm and marched him

outside the porch door, and drew the bar across, and came to the Exalted One and said: 'Sir, that person has been marched out [247] by me. The company is wholly pure. Sir, let the Exalted One pronounce the obligations for the monks.'

'It is a strange thing, Moggallana! It is a wonder, Moggallana, how that deluded person should wait till he was led by the arm!'

Then the Exalted One admonished the monks, saying: 'From this time forth, monks, I shall not observe the sabbath. I shall not pronounce the obligations. Now and henceforth do ye observe the sabbath. Do ye pronounce the obligations. It is out of place, monks, it is inopportune that the Wayfarer should observe the sabbath, should pronounce the obligations, when the company is not wholly pure.'

Monks, there are these eight strange and wonderful things about the mighty ocean: beholding which again and again the Asuras delight in the mighty ocean. What are the eight?

(1) Monks, the mighty ocean flows down, slides and tends downward gradually. There is no abrupt precipice. Since this is so, monks, this is the first strange and wonderful thing about the mighty ocean, beholding which from time to time the Asuras delight in the mighty ocean.

(ii) Then again, monks, the mighty ocean is of a stable nature, it overpasses not its boundary. Since this is so, monks ... this is the second strange and wonderful thing...

(iii) Then again, monks, the mighty ocean consorts not with a dead body: for when a dead body is found in the mighty ocean, quickly it wafts it ashore, throws it up on the shore. Since this is so, monks ... this is the third strange and wonderful thing...

(iv) Then again, monks, whatsoever great rivers there are - namely, Ganga, Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu, Mahi - these, when they reach the mighty ocean, abandon their former names and lineage, and go henceforth by the name of just "mighty ocean." Since this is so, monks, this is the fourth strange and wonderful thing...

(v) Then again, monks, whatever streams flow into the mighty ocean, and whatever floods fall from the sky, there is no shrinkage nor overflow seen thereby in the mighty ocean. Since this is so, monks, this is the fifth strange and wonderful thing...

(vi) Then again, monks, the mighty ocean is of one flavour, the flavour of salt. Since this is so ... this is the sixth...

(vii) Then again, monks, the mighty ocean has many gems, divers gems. Therein are these sorts: the pearl, crystal, lapis lazuli, chank, quartz, coral, silver, pure gold, ruby, catseye. Since the mighty ocean has many gems ... this is the seventh strange and wonderful thing...

(viii) Once more, monks, the mighty ocean is the abode of great creatures. Therein are these creatures: [248] the leviathan, the fish-eater, the monster, Asuras, Nagas and Gandharvas. There are in the mighty ocean creatures of a yojana in length, of two, three, four, five hundred yojanas in length. Since this is so, monks, this is the eighth strange and wonderful thing. These, then, are the eight strange and wonderful things about the mighty ocean.

So also, monks, in this dhamma-discipline there are eight strange and wonderful things, seeing which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline. What are the eight?

(i) Just as, monks, the mighty ocean flows down, slides and tends downward gradually, and there is no abrupt precipice, so also in this dhamma-discipline the training is gradual, the action is gradual, the procedure is gradual; there is no abrupt penetration of knowledge. Since this is so ... this is the first strange and wonderful thing, seeing which monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline.

(ii) Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is of a stable nature, since it overpasses not its boundary, even so, monks, my disciples transgress not, even at cost of life, the training enjoined on them by me. Since this is so ... this is the second strange and wonderful thing.

(iii) Just as, monks, the mighty ocean consorts not with a dead body; for when a dead body is found in the mighty ocean it quickly wafts it ashore, throws it up on the shore; even so, monks, whatsoever person is immoral, of a wicked nature, impure, of suspicious behaviour, of covert deeds, one who is no recluse though claiming to be such, one who is no liver of the Brahma-life though claiming to be such, one rotten within, full of lusts, a rubbish-heap of filth, - with such the order consorts not, but gathering together quickly throws him out. Though, monks, he be seated in the midst of the order, yet is he far away from the order; far away is the order from him. Since this is so ... this is the third strange and wonderful thing...

(iv) Just as, monks, whatsoever great rivers there are - namely, Ganga, Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu, Mahi - these, on reaching the mighty ocean, abandon their former names and lineage, and henceforth go by the name of just "mighty ocean," even so, monks, the four castes - namely, the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants and the serfs - on going forth from home to the homeless in the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Wayfarer, abandon their former names and lineage and go by the name of just "recluses who are Sakya sons." Since this is so, this is the fourth strange and wonderful thing...

(v) Just as, monks, whatsoever streams flow into the mighty ocean and whatsoever floods fall from the sky, there is no shrinkage nor overflow seen thereby in the mighty ocean, - even so, monks, though many monks [249] pass finally away in that condition of nibbana which has no remainder, yet is there no shrinkage nor overflow in that condition of nibbana seen thereby. Since this is so ... this is the fifth strange and wonderful thing...

(vi) Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is of one flavour, the flavour of salt, even so, monks, this dhamma is of one flavour, the flavour of release. Since this is so ... this is the sixth strange and wonderful thing...

(vii) Just as, monks, the mighty ocean has many gems, divers gems ... even so in this dhamma are many gems, divers gems; therein are the four arisings of mindfulness, the four best efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven limbs of wisdom, the Ariyan eightfold way. Since this is so ... this is the seventh strange and wonderful thing...

(viii) Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is the abode of great creatures, therein are these creatures, - the leviathan, the fish-eater ... Gandharvas; even so, monks, this

dhamma-discipline is the abode of great creatures, therein are these creatures: the stream-winner, he who fares on by realizing the fruits of stream-winning; the once-returner, he who fares on by realizing the fruits of once-returning; the no-returner, he who fares on by realizing the fruits of no-return; the arahant, he who fares on by arahantship. Since this is so ... this monks, is the eighth strange and wonderful thing about this dhamma-discipline, beholding which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline.

These, then, monks, are the eight strange and wonderful things in this dhamma-discipline, beholding which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline.'

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

It rains right through the thatch, it rains not through the open. So open up the thatched: thus will it not rain through."

S: This is quite an important section. In a way, one could consider it as a central section to the whole Udana, a watershed, as it were.

In the course of the whole section, one sees that the teaching has reached a more developed form than in any other part of the Udana, and also what, for want of a better term, we may call the Buddha's organization or movement has also reached its highest point of development, so far as the Udana is concerned.

First of all, the episode takes place at Savatthi. This is, in any case, the Buddha's informal headquarters. We see also that it is towards the end of the Buddha's life - at least, the latter part of his career inasmuch as Ananda appears to be the attendant. The scene takes place 'in East Park at the storeyed house of Migara's mother'. We have come across this place once before. It was apparently a sort of wooden building, perhaps a sort of summer-house in a park, and we can tell that it [250] is a proper building because of the reference to the porch and to the bar across the door later on. This is the first such reference in the whole section.

So here are the Buddha and the monks, staying in a proper building, a wooden building, and holding their meetings there. This is the first reference to such regular meetings in the Udana: 'Now at this time the Exalted One was seated surrounded by a great number of monks on a day when it was the sabbath' - rather an unfortunate translation, in a way. But it was an uposatha day. The uposatha days are the days of the new moon, the eve of the full moon, and the two eighths of the lunar month in between. So here we see the Buddha and his disciples meeting together regularly, on a fixed day, or at least holding a meeting when they happened to be all together in the same place on a certain fixed day according to the lunar calendar, and we see him celebrating a sort of simple observance. This is the first time we have come across this in the course of the Udana.

The question arises: where did the observance come from? Has anybody got any ideas about that or read anything about it? (Silence.) Apparently, it was a common practice for the sramanas of different schools, different sects, different traditions, to celebrate those four days by getting together, at least in an informal manner. It was suggested to the Buddha that he also should introduce this practice into the Sangha and he agreed. From this and from later accounts, it appears that the celebration took a twofold form. In the first place, the Buddha

and the disciples simply sat together and meditated, and in the second place there was a recitation of certain verses known as the pratimoksha. What that is, I shall say in a minute.

Quite a few times already in the course of the Udana, we have seen the Buddha and his disciples sitting together quietly, meditating, in the same state of mind, all equally experiencing and enjoying the same state of higher consciousness. This, apparently, was one of the things that they did on the occasion of the uposatha evening and night. They sat together; they had what we might describe as a group meditation. So the group meditation, we can see clearly, is a very ancient practice in Buddhism.

But what about the pratimoksha, or patimokkha? At present, the term pratimoksha is affixed to the list of 150 basic rules that the bhikkhu is expected to observe. So nowadays, when the uposatha day is observed by the bhikkhus, a prominent feature of the proceedings is the recitation of the 150 clauses of the complete pratimoksha, and this practice has been going on for a long time. But, when we read that the Buddha or the early disciples recited the pratimoksha in this way on the occasion of the uposatha, after their group meditation, it is usually assumed that that pratimoksha is the 150 clauses of the complete monastic rule. But the question arises, was it (those 150 clauses)? This has been discussed at great length, especially by S. Dutt in *Early Buddhist Monachism*, and the position seems to be that the term pratimoksha was originally applied to verses of the Teachings which were recited at the uposatha meetings. We have already seen the Buddha uttering various udanas, various verses. We have even seen the Buddha giving the bhikkhus verses to learn and to recite. So it would appear that the earliest stage of the practice was that, when they gathered together on the uposatha days, they recited verses summarizing the Dharma, and these were known as pratimoksha.

Now, in the Pali Canon, there are verses of this kind which are actually [251] referred to as pratimoksha. There is a famous set of two or three verses in the Dhammapada. The set begins:

This is the famous verse which is supposed to summarize the whole teaching: 'Abstention from all evil, doing of good, purifying the heart: this is the teaching of all the Buddhas.' And we have two or three similar verses immediately following. These verses are known as the pratimoksha of the Buddha Vipassi - in other words, the term pratimoksha is applied to them.

According to S. Dutt, the fact that they are attributed to the Buddha Vipassi, who was the previous Buddha, living thousands of years before the Buddha himself, suggests that they are of great antiquity and probably, therefore, belong to the very early phase of Buddhism, in the sense of Gautama the Buddha's Buddhism.

From these considerations, it would seem that when the early bhikkhus got together for the uposatha meetings, what they recited after the group meditation was not a set of rules, but a pratimoksha consisting simply of a verse summary of the Teaching: Dharma verses, Dharma stanzas. That seems quite likely, because we know that in those early days there were no rules, so what had they to recite? But, according to S. Dutt, much later on - probably after the Buddha's decease - when the Sangha had become much more highly organized, when the pratimoksha had been drawn up, then the recitation of the Dharma stanzas was dropped, and the pratimoksha in the sense of a list of rules was recited, and the observance of the monks was as it were set against that pratimoksha, that monastic rule of 150 clauses. The observance

then became a sort of confessional service. If a monk had broken any particular rule, he had to confess it, and action was taken upon that. But there was a third stage, in which the pratimoksha was merely recited, and the confession between two monks at a time took place before the recitation; and that is the modern practice, even now.

Pratimoksha means something like 'release from'.

Devaraja: What, release from anything specific?

S: Nobody really knows. Later commentators, of course, looking at it from the standpoint of monastic rule, take it to mean release from one's faults through confession, but that is a much later interpretation. The term seems to be pre-Buddhistic; because the pre-Buddhistic communities, sramana-parivrajaka communities, had their own proper pratimokshas. The term seems to mean simply the recitation of stanzas summarizing one particular Dharma or teaching.

Therefore, there are three stages of development. In the earliest stage, there is a meeting with a group meditation, and after the group meditation the Buddha recites certain stanzas embodying the Teaching and the monks recite after him; or, later on, just the monks will chant together by themselves. At a later stage, they recite not Dharma stanzas but a list of 150 rules, and they check their observance against those rules, confessing any breach and purifying themselves. In the third stage, the confession - a younger monk confessing to an older or senior monk takes place before the actual recitation, so that the recitation becomes a sort of formality. That is the present position in those countries where the pratimoksha in this sense is still recited on the occasion of [252] the uposatha day - which is most parts of the Theravada world and some parts of the Mahayana world where the original bhikkhu tradition continues.

So you can see the process has developed. We must not imagine here, therefore, that the Buddha has been invited by Ananda to recite the list of 150 rules. That would appear quite inconsistent with the Buddha's whole attitude and teaching so far. One can hardly imagine that the Buddha, as one has encountered him in the Udana so far, would be reciting a list of 150 rules four times a month at this meeting of all the bhikkhus. But it seems quite consistent with what we know of him from the Udana so far that he should recite certain verses expressing the Teaching, and get the monks to repeat them after him at this congregational meeting.

The translation of patimokkha as 'obligations' reflects, of course, much later usage.

If you look at it in the light of the later interpretation, the situation is that a certain monk has broken certain rules, but if you look at it in the older sense the situation is that a certain monk is not living up to the Ideal, is not faithful or true to the Ideal; he is not a real follower of the Buddha. And, once again, we see Moggallana exercising his psychic powers.

Why do you think the Buddha decided that from then onwards he would not observe the uposatha, and not pronounce the pratimoksha?

: Because there were monks incapable of maintaining the purity of the assembly themselves.

S: There is that, though he does say: 'It is out of place, monks, it is inopportune that the Wayfarer should observe the sabbath, should pronounce the obligations, when the company is not wholly pure', which suggests, if one can use the term, a sort of annoyance, almost disappointment, on the Buddha's part. Or perhaps it is something like his absenting himself earlier on, and going off into the forest: he hopes it will bring them to their senses. Or perhaps he does realize that, sooner or later, they are going to have to manage on their own and that this is a suitable opportunity for him to withdraw and leave it to them.

Sona: It is interesting to see here that Moggallana seems to use force to remove the person from the assembly.

S: Well, a sort of force.

: What is the significance of the impure monk ignoring Moggallana at first? The Buddha remarks upon it, that it takes three askings.

S: It is a sort of obstinacy. People often do behave in that sort of way, don't they?

: Trying to bluff it out.

S: Trying to bluff it out right to the end.

: He must have done something pretty heavy to get slung out.

S: Yes! Probably not just one thing, but his whole way of life, his whole attitude, his whole approach.

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Then, of course, we get a very famous set of similes. This is found elsewhere in the Canon. Let us go into those similes now, one by one. We need not bother much with the different qualities of the ocean, but let us go straight on to the application of them to the dharma-vinaya.

'So also, monks, in this dhamma-discipline there are eight strange and wonderful things, seeing which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline.'

There are a couple of things to take note of there. I think this is the first time we have had this term 'dhamma-discipline' - dhamma-vinaya. This again indicates a fairly late stage in the development of the Buddha's teaching - in the course of his lifetime, that is. Dhamma, of course, means the teaching in general. Vinaya means the more practical side of it, the actual observance or way of life. The later interpretation, of course, will be the monastic rule, as in Vinaya-Pitaka, but earlier on it has the more general meaning simply of practice, way of life. So dharma-vinaya means the whole teaching of the Buddha in its - I won't say theoretical aspect, but in its aspects of principle and of application; or, if you like, the Ideal and the way of life.

: So vinaya is - would 'practice' be the equivalent?

S: One could say 'practice', yes. Or it is sometimes translated 'doctrine and discipline', 'theory

and practice', or 'ideal and application of the ideal'.

Then it says: 'seeing which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline'. That is a very important point; the monks take delight in it. Apparently that monk who was ejected didn't (take delight in it). So the dhamma and the vinaya are something to enjoy, to take delight in. If you are not taking delight in them, there is something wrong somewhere.

First of all, then, the Buddha says:

'Just as, monks, the mighty ocean flows down, slides and tends downward gradually, and there is no abrupt precipice, so also in this dhamma-discipline the training is gradual, the action is gradual, the procedure is gradual; there is no abrupt penetration of knowledge. Since this is so ... this is the first strange and wonderful thing, seeing which monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline.'

This raises the whole question of the gradual path and the abrupt path, as it is sometimes called, especially in the Zen context. But here the Buddha's own position is made very clear: that the approach to Insight is gradual. It is a progress along the whole sequence of the positive nidanas. There is no sudden penetration of knowledge.

: Except in the story of Suppabuddha. Surely you find that there is a sudden penetration there?

S: It isn't sudden. It's more that all the different stages of the nidanas are traversed quite rapidly. It is not that one has made a jump, as it were. It was set forth there how the Buddha prepared the way and he roused [254] and fired and gladdened him first; and then, when he was ready, he set forth his own distinctive teaching.

ABC: Perhaps it might be easiest to do it in that way. If you can keep going after the first step of progress without giving time for other structures to come in, you would probably progress quicker to the ...

S: Yes, if you can actually do that.

ABC: Suppabuddha seemed to do that.

S: Yes, but also, don't forget the Buddha looked round that whole assembly - there was quite a large crowd of people - and saw that Suppabuddha was ready, and he preached, as it were, just for him. But Suppabuddha was just one among so many hundreds, maybe even thousands. But the Buddha saw that Suppabuddha was ready, and therefore he gave that particular teaching. Suppabuddha had done much of the preliminary work already for himself. He had come to that point where the Buddha could lay down that teaching into which he would immediately penetrate. The Buddha was just putting the finishing touches. Suppabuddha had already traversed much of the gradual path, if not most of it, for himself. He was prepared. But there is no abrupt transition from a highly unskilled to a highly skilled state of mind. There are various intermediate steps, and in Suppabuddha's case he seems to have gone through them before he even came in contact with the Buddha; whereas everybody else in the assembly, apparently, hadn't done that preliminary work. But the Buddha didn't speak for them, only for Suppabuddha.

The Buddha says: 'there is no abrupt penetration of knowledge' in other words, Insight. You don't go from an ordinary, worldly state of consciousness directly to knowledge or Insight. You have to go through all the positive nidanas, and develop the positive emotions and so on, first. And then you are in a position to develop knowledge and Insight. That is, in fact, what happened in the case of Suppabuddha.

'And when the Exalted One knew that the heart of Suppabuddha, the leper, was ready, softened, unbiassed, elated and believing, then he unfolded those dhamma-teachings...'

So, secondly,

'Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is of a stable nature, since it overpasses not its boundary, even so, monks, my disciples transgress not, even at cost of life, the training enjoined on them by me... this is the second strange and wonderful thing ...'

Here, 'training' obviously doesn't mean just a set of rules but a whole ideal - the meaning and purpose of the way of life.

This passage raises the whole question of the place of rules, as distinct from principles, or whether rules have any place at all; whereas, in the Hinayana especially, as in the Theravada today, the bhikkhu ideal quickly became codified in the form of a list of rules, often very elaborate and detailed. So the question arises, to what extent is that necessary? The rules were originally drawn up so that one could, as it were, check [255] off one's actual, concrete behaviour against the ideal and see whether one was really living up to that and conforming to it. But, very quickly, if one is not careful, this becomes something quite external - an external conformity; neglecting the spirit of the thing. I have already quoted the Buddha's remark about there being, at the beginning of his career, many arhants and few rules and, towards the end, many rules but few arhants.

It is probably good to hold off the laying down of rules for as long as possible. When one has to start laying down rules, it is always a sign of decline. It is interesting that the Buddha never laid down any rules until he had to. Only when something went wrong did the Buddha lay down a rule to counteract that, or to make things right for the future, or to prevent things going wrong again in that way in the future. But he did not sit down at the beginning of his career and draw up a list of rules. The rules were laid down, when they were laid down - even according to the Theravadin account - only in accordance with certain circumstances and situations that developed. Had those situations not developed - had certain bhikkhus not misbehaved - presumably, there would not have been any rules at all.

: It seems quite sad that at the beginning of the Buddha's career there were many arhants and few rules and at the end it was the other way round. It seems sad ... so swiftly.

S: It is because more and more people hear about it, and then it is almost axiomatic that, beyond a certain point - and that point is very difficult to determine - the more people join a movement the lower the level of the movement will be. But that point, beyond which deterioration in the general level starts taking place, is very difficult to determine. It may vary from time to time, from movement to movement. But (the movement) can always be renewed. There were times in Buddhist history when the whole spiritual movement represented by Buddhism underwent tremendous renewal. There was a sort of rebirth,

because of actions taken by certain energetic individuals - like Tsongkhapa in Tibet, for instance. So the possibility of renewal is always there, but it all starts with one individual who communicates it to a few; and then again that will become a big successful movement, as the Gelugpa tradition did in Tibet and then again people will start being attracted for the wrong reasons and you have to start all over again. But this is inevitable.

Even where there are rules, as in the case of simple rules like the Ten Precepts, it should always be made clear that the rules or precepts are concrete applications of principle; that it is the principle that is to be understood and absorbed and assimilated, and that no amount of rules can fully express the spirit of the principle or its nature. You can't just make sure that you are following the rules and as it were forget about the principle. Some people quite sincerely and conscientiously try to do that. It is much less trouble, you could say; but that doesn't work. It might keep you on the right path in a sense, but in a rather unintelligent, unaware sort of way, and you may find yourself externally conforming, but spiritually not with the principle behind the rules at all.

That is why I sometimes say, in the case of the Ten Precepts, that they are really ten principles; or, you may say, prominent applications of ten principles.

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Let us go back for a few minutes to the uposatha meeting. If we look at it more closely, we can see that the two things that they do - the group meditation and the recitation of the Dharma verses - represent two important principles to be borne in mind in connection with such gatherings. Can you see what they may be? (Silence.) What does the group meditation represent, really? What is happening? What are they all doing?

Voices: Communicating.

S: Not just communicating; what does communication involve?

: Sharing a higher reality.

S: Yes, sharing in a higher reality. They are all in the same state of mind or consciousness. That is the first thing: that, when they gather together on the uposatha day, they should all be in the same state of consciousness, the same state of mind. This is the important thing. Then what does the common recitation of the Dharma stanzas stand for?

Voices: A common ideal.

S: A common ideal, yes. These are really the two essential features of the whole process of those meetings, as expressed in these two observances: that there should be a common mind, a common mental state, a common state of consciousness; and a common ideal, towards which they are all working. Obviously, a common rule or list of rules is quite secondary and much less important.

Sona: I was just thinking it would be rather nice if at the monthly Order evening we could have a group meditation and a recitation.

S: Reading.

: Or a reading.

S: We do have a recitation, as when we recite the Heart Sutra together. That may be something worth extending.

Sona: We do it that way round in the summer. We always do the Puja first, and then the group meditation. It might be preferable to do it - I suppose it depends which way you look at it. Perhaps it would be better to do this as a group meditation first, and then do the Dharma.

S: I don't know whether people have any definite views about this. Some people, I know, don't like the chanting at the end of the meditation, because they feel it disturbs the concentration that they have developed. Others, again, feel that it is a natural thing to meditate first and then culminate in the Puja. Has anyone any views on that?

: I think it depends on people's practice. I find that at the five minutes bell it is never enough, really, to finish off the practice. And if I haven't finished the metta bhavana (?) I am stuck with it half finished, and then the chanting -

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S: Obviously, when you are all meditating together, that assumes that you are meditating for the same length of time and therefore that you should know in advance how long you have, whether an hour or half an hour, and so on, and terminate your practice accordingly so as to be ready for the next stage, with everybody else - when there is a next stage.

: That's (all right) when you've got a watch and you can see the time.

S: But sometimes we know, from the sequence of the practice itself, if you always do it with the same span of time.

Sona: I much prefer doing the meditation first and then the Puja.

Sagaramati: It is very good doing the Puja after the Heart Sutra, then the practice, and finish with the Transference of Merits. It is very natural and forms a whole.

S: I think we did this at one time, many years ago.

: I know you suggested doing the metta-bhavana for a little while beforehand, then the Puja.

S: All sorts of variants are possible, obviously.

: There is no discussion of group communication, or whatever, in the Pali Canon. It doesn't talk of them coming together to discuss or ...

S: Well, yes, in a way (there is), in a slightly different manner. The Buddha says: 'When you come together, either observe the Ariyan silence' - which suggests meditation - 'or dhamma-katha' - or discuss the Dharma. Or, presumably, recite the Dharma stanzas.

: It just occurs to me that our weekly Order meetings and the monthly Order days are the equivalent to the uposatha days.

S: Yes, very much so.

: And one of the most important features of those days is that we get together and discuss things. It doesn't seem to have any regularised parallel.

S: Well, perhaps they didn't need - because their whole way of life was so settled already, by custom. They went for their alms in the morning, and they listened to the Buddha's teaching and discussed the Dharma with one another, and they meditated in the afternoon, and so on. Everything was so simple and already organized. There was nothing of that nature to discuss. And the Buddha was there, in those days, apparently taking all the important decisions. After the Buddha's decease, they did call samgiti - councils, as we call them - at which there seems to have been some discussion about what to do. But, in the Buddha's day, it was very simple indeed.

: I wonder whether we're not actually overvaluing such discussions.

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S: Discussion of ... ?

: Well, particularly of Friends reporting in.

S: Yes, I was thinking of that, too. It seems to have got, judging by recent reports of reportings-in, a bit out of hand. Is it that there are too many people having to report in, or of maybe some people having so much to report in?

: Well, usually what happens is that one or two issues get taken up and discussed at length. But, as Sona points out, they often don't concern some sections of the meeting, although they ...

S: If it is a question of some important matter of principle, then surely it must be discussed and clarified. But if it is just a minor matter concerning a very few people, perhaps they should be asked to get together separately.

: I think perhaps a lot of those things could be dealt with in chapters. There are some things which concern Order Members as a whole which have to be discussed, but perhaps we should spend more time just practising together and listening to a lecture, or reciting ...

S: Yes, listening to a tape, or reading aloud.

: It gets very claustrophobic.

: Whereas there simply is not enough emphasis on the spiritual.

S: What one has to watch especially is the problem-oriented approach - the very personal approach in a rather subjective, negative sense; not to give people too much opportunity to indulge in what is virtually just talking about themselves. Or you could perhaps ask an Order Member to prepare a paper on some aspect of the Dharma and read it, and then discuss that. Or, failing that, listen to a tape that most of the Order Members have not heard for some time, and discuss it afterwards. That would be very useful especially as many of them are having to

teach. As there are about 100 tapes, I am sure that not all Order Members are well versed in all of them yet.

Also, when we have got the seminars transcribed and properly edited, the Order can break up into study groups, at least for a couple of hours.

Sona: I think that is why, in some ways, the Order retreat is so successful - ... There was a lot of variation; you didn't spend a whole day talking, and there was a period of about two hours for study.

S: Of course, it might be good to have a couple of hours of silence.

Voices: Mm.

S: No doubt we should discuss this at the Convention, and lay down a few norms. (Voices agreeing.)

Sona: Something else occurs to me, coming back to the Precepts. It seems [259] quite a good idea, in some ways, to chant the Precepts in Pali, because in one way they represent the negative side, the ... Personally, I know quite a few other people who get a lot more out of reciting the positive ... (Voices agreeing.)

S: I did, in fact, hear that they were sometimes recited (Voice: No, always...) - and I was quite happy about that.

Sona: I should think it would make it that bit more - (S: - explicit.) - not laying down a rule, but sort of ...

: I think it would also be good if the five lay Precepts, the five Dharmas, were worked for recitation in English. A lot of people don't know what they are reciting in Pali.

S: Not that that matters all that much, actually.

Sona: Why doesn't it matter?

S: I think sometimes too much importance is attached to knowing exactly what you are doing, in a sort of conceptual sense.

: Yes. With the Precepts, I think the way they work - because they aren't a set of rules, they are not things you carry around and you come up against a situation and look at the Precepts and apply them - they are something that you know almost unconsciously and which you ...

S: - you can't help practising.

: You can't help practising them, yes. And if you ask somebody, 'Do you practise the Precepts?', they might say no, but in fact they know the Precepts, they are at the back of their minds. So I think it is quite important that people should actually be aware of their meaning; that they do recite them.

S: Sometimes it is difficult, when you are actually reciting, to think about the meaning in a conceptual sense. It is all right for you to recite, but if you are having to think about it as you are reciting, sometimes it detracts from the recitation; or you might even feel like stopping and thinking about something.

: I think if we did this, for instance when we recite the Positive Precepts - I certainly don't linger on them or stop on them; they have a definite effect ...

S: Yes. Of course, if it is in English, obviously you will absorb much more of the meaning, but if it is in Pali, even if you know the meaning of the Pali - ?

: Yes.

Devaraja: The value of presenting the Positive Precepts as a ... the five dharmas, to people, is that it gives them this sort of positive thing to practise, which they often don't think in terms of.

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S: This raises the whole question of what use we should make in the Puja of the Refuges and Precepts at all. This is something that we want to take up at the time of the Convention.

: Perhaps we should just use the five dharmas.

S: That might be a good idea, yes. I take it that everybody knows what the five dharmas are? The five positive counterparts of the five Precepts.

Sona: What is the one ... ?

S: Mindfulness. Though there is metta, which is the positive counterpart of the first; then dana, which is the positive counterpart of the second. Then contentment - - is the positive counterpart of the third, and then truth and mindfulness. Therefore, one might say: love, generosity, contentment, truthfulness, mindfulness; which is quite a good little list.

Sona: Could you say - mindfulness would purify what part - the mind?

: It would not be in terms of purification, would it?

S: I don't know, I haven't thought about that yet.

(Some inaudible dialogue between participants.)

S: But, if you interpret them positively, really they are all mental, in a way, aren't they? Love is of the mind. You are not thinking in terms of any specific expression, but of love in general, and generosity in general. This can be mental and verbal, as well as physical. But principles are principles, and as principles they are in a way neither mental nor verbal nor bodily.

(Some inaudible dialogue.)

S: All right then, this third comparison:

"Just as, monks, the mighty ocean consorts not with a dead body (but) quickly wafts it ashore" ...

in the same way

"the order consorts not, but gathering together quickly throws him out"

that is, the one who is not truly conforming to the Ideal. It is almost like the healthy physical body expelling germs. Someone who does not really belong sooner or later finds himself outside, no longer inside.

Devaraja: But, presumably, if the person is honest about his inabilities or failings, he is not so much a germ as an organ of the body to be ...

S: - gone slightly wrong.

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Devaraja: - to be brought into harmony, yes.

: I think that is the significance of his having to be led out. He is not only weak, he is also incorrigible.

S: Incorrigible, yes. He can't say to the other monks, 'Look, I'm making a complete mess of it. Please help me.' He just won't do anything. Even when the Buddha says, 'There is someone among us who doesn't really belong,' he doesn't take any action; he doesn't leave or say anything, even.

Subhuti: In a sense, the weak are only tyrannical when they don't acknowledge their own weakness.

Devaraja: Can you amplify that? I am not quite sure what you mean.

Subhuti: Well, I was referring back to what Bhante was saying about the tyranny of the weak. When the weak acknowledge that they are weak and need help and can accept that, there is no problem, no difficulty, but when the weak are trying to rationalize or disguise or hide or cover up their weakness, they are a drain on the whole organism.

S: Or even try to cover it up with an appearance or pretence of strength.

: Yes; practise self-confidence and ego- ...

S: Yes, right. Let us go on to the fourth comparison. Just as the great rivers abandon their former names and lineage on reaching the ocean, in the same way the four castes - nobles, brahmins, merchants, serfs - on going forth from home to the homeless in the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Wayfarer, abandon their former names and are just known as 'recluses who are Sakya sons'. This is the fourth strange and wonderful thing. What do you think this really means?

: There is no trading on previous connections, or ...

S: Not only that, but the Sangha is a purely spiritual community, in which all ethnic differences are transcended. It exists on a quite different level. On the whole, this has been kept up through the ages in the Buddhist East, with one or two unfortunate exceptions, but no more than that. In Ceylon some sections of the Sangha did not ordain, did not accept into the Sangha, those of so-called low caste - that is, the (sh... nikaya) - But I have heard that that has been broken recently, and that one person of non-Goigama caste was ordained into the samma Nikaya a few years ago.

This raises a very important question. In our own world, the West, what is it that corresponds to difference of caste?

: Class.

S: Class and nationality. So it is very important that, in the Western Buddhist Order, there is no distinction of class or nationality; that it is classless and not only international but supranational. I think this is very important. We haven't really had to do anything about this [262] so far, just because practically everybody was of British origin, but now we are spreading, and even the New Zealanders can feel that they are quite akin to the English, but the Finns, for instance, feel quite different; Vajrabodhi made that point in correspondence some time ago that it would be a great mistake for the Order, or even the Movement, as a whole, to identify itself with Anglo-Saxon cultural assumptions. I have asked him to clarify that and maybe write something about it: what are these Anglo-Saxon cultural assumptions? He hasn't done that yet, but he probably will get on to it. It is quite important, because a lot of the things that we may claim to take for granted could well be just Anglo-Saxon assumptions, and not have much to do with the Dharma, or they may reflect simply the Anglo-Saxon cultural situation.

For instance, one point that Vajrabodhi made was that in Anglo-Saxon countries anything of a spiritual nature tends to be anti-Establishment, but this is not the case in Finland. There is no alternative society there, so everything becomes part of the Establishment - even things which are in principle anti-Establishment or anti the existing set-up. They are incorporated quite consciously into the Establishment.

: Can you expand that?

S: Well, take for instance the question of political parties in Finland: there are about 20 of them, though three or four are bigger and more important than the others. So certain public services and institutions are apportioned among them according to their relative strength. For instance - I gave this example before - the opera is run by the communist party; that is to say, the opera is run by people who politically are affiliated to the communist party. And certain other institutions are run by people affiliated to other political parties. In this way, everything is shared around; everybody has some influence, some power, some pull. Radio time is similarly divided. Radio programmes are organized by representatives of the different political parties according to their respective strength. In this way, everybody can be absorbed. If you can set up a party and enrol so many followers or members, you are entitled to a certain amount of radio time, a certain share in power, a certain percentage of people in the civil service, and so on. That is how they run it. It would be quite different from anything

we have in England or America.

Therefore, the question is seriously mooted among the Friends in Helsinki whether they should attach themselves to a political party or not, because there everything is attached to a political party, and funds are channelled through the political parties. All the different political parties have different cultural groups, organizations and institutions attached to them or affiliated to them, and funds are fed into the bodies through the political party to which they are affiliated; and that is practically the only way of getting funds. This is why the Finns dislike people appealing to the public for funds. Their idea is that, when a group is set up, it should affiliate to the appropriate political party and get its funds in that way. There is full provision for that, and any group can do it. The Friends in Helsinki could do it tomorrow if they chose to take that step, and Vajrabodhi and I have talked about it at length. He is clear which political party is nearest to the Friends, or the Friends to which political party: it is the party called the Centre Party, which is actually left of centre, but it is mainly the farmers' party, and it believes very much in ecological measures and preservation [263] of the natural environment and the importance of agriculture, and so on. Already a number of yoga groups and suchlike groups are affiliated to it; so, according to Vajrabodhi, if ever the Friends decided to take this step that would be the party that would be their natural protector, as it were.

: Is that one of the big three?

S: It is one of the big three or four, yes. It has hardly any following in Helsinki, but it is very strong in the countryside.

Devaraja: It's not up to the party to decide what group they want affiliated, or what?

S: No doubt it works both ways, but one never hears of a group not being accepted. The parties are only too happy to have yet another affiliated group. You can then claim a share of the funds available.

Devaraja: Where do the funds come from originally?

S: From the government.

Devaraja: The government takes it through taxation?

S: Yes. In the same way, the Lutheran church gets 1 per cent. of gross national income, so they don't have to bother about fund raising; there are so few practising Christians, they spend all the money building these very modern churches in the latest style of architecture. That is why they have got these churches there: they have got the money. But this is being attacked at present, and some people say it is ridiculous. The Marxists especially say it is ridiculous that the church, which has so few actual members, (should receive 1 per cent. of gross national income.) It is 1 per cent. of the taxation contributed by people who are officially members of the church, but it amounts to about 90 per cent. or more (of the population) at present, though they are purely nominal members, as people are nominal members of the Church of England. But even some of those who are nominal members are not happy about having to give 1 per cent. of their share of taxation (to the church).

Devaraja: Do you think, on the other hand, that there is something to be said for not affiliating, and encouraging an attitude of personal giving?

S: Yes, this is something that is being discussed and which is perhaps developing among the Friends there. Vajrabodhi and Bodhisri, too, would prefer not to have to affiliate. That depends upon dana coming in; but dana is beginning to come in now, after a lot of difficulty. But Vajrabodhi never says anything about it, except in the most general way, as a spiritual principle. He never asks for gifts, but people do contribute. They have started now, quite substantially, in the course of my visit. The expenses of that visit were more than met out of dana, which was very good, because Vajrabodhi was being very heavily burdened with the expenses on his ...

I just cite this to give you an example of a different sort of cultural and social set-up, into which the Movement is now penetrating.

Devaraja: I suppose, in a way, affiliations to a political grouping could be considered rather like in the Buddha's time there were wealthy people [264] who made large donations.

S: Except that (such people would be) your followers and the donations (would be) free from strings. But if you are affiliated to a political party and are getting funds from it, you are expected to further its interests - at least, to vote for it, and possibly to help canvass for votes at the time of elections. You would certainly be expected to pull your weight a bit in that way. So it would not be free from strings. Though, again, you might be able wholeheartedly to support that party. If you were in that position, that would be very fortunate because in this country one certainly doesn't feel that one could wholeheartedly support any party. Therefore, in Finland non-participation in politics is not regarded with favour at all. For instance, (the idea that) we are a charity, therefore we shouldn't be mixed up in politics, in fact we are not permitted to do so, and that we get our charitable status because we are not involved in politics - this whole point of view is completely absent in Finland and, in fact, in Scandinavia generally. In a way, it is healthier because you are much more part of the general community.

: Hm. But affiliation might initially discourage people of other political persuasions.

S: Yes. It seems that a feeling is developing in Finland, at least in Helsinki, that the Centre Party is the natural protector of the spiritual-cum-oriental groups. But there are as yet, as far as I know, no affiliations apart from a few yoga groups. However, it is a completely different set-up, and certain things that we take for granted - that it is good for an institution like a charity not to have anything to do with politics - are completely inapplicable there and would certainly not be agreed to by the average Finn, or the average Friend over there. It would be a quite different situation.

They also make a distinction between registered and unregistered societies. An unregistered society, which is what the Friends are technically, at the moment, is not permitted to publish books. Only a registered society is permitted to do so. So if you are an unregistered society the books have to be published in the name of an individual, so our books are all published in the name of the unofficial Mitra Petka. He is our publisher there; he publishes our literature.

: ... you can't get anything published unless ...

S: But there it is much more extensive. You can't have a telephone number as an unregistered society; only an individual or a registered society can have one.

So this underlines the fact that we mustn't universalize what is peculiar to Great Britain or any part of it, so far as the Order is concerned. We mustn't regard that as the norm or take it for granted.

: I suppose that is the danger of norms in general. That seems to be inherent ...

S: No, there are two things to be distinguished. The Dharma remains the same, but our way of putting it into practice and operation should not be identified with an approach which is natural only to certain people in a certain place.

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Devaraja: I agree, but has that got its application in individual situations as well?

S: Yes, sure. In other words, we mustn't lay down, for the Movement as a whole, much less for the Order as a whole, a framework or plan of action which reflects conditions only in England, and expect that to be followed and applied outside England. That would be ridiculous. The teaching, or the general principle, the ideal, remains the same.

To get back to the question of nationalism, this is something that we will have to watch in the future: that the Order should be a genuinely international and supranational body. There should be no conflict of national interests or loyalties within the Order, and ideally within the Movement as a whole. This is a good reason why we should as it were 'go into Europe', now that we have every opportunity. It would be very good if more of our Order Members were drawn from Europe, so that we were almost compelled to be international and supranational and it didn't just become an English show, which would be undesirable; it is the Western Buddhist Order. Some of our ways of doing things may be quite good, but others may not be so good.

And we have to try to transcend local patriotisms in every sense. I think it is quite strong as between the north and the south of England. We had one member in Birmingham, as you remember. That was always a great difficulty for her. She strongly resented that the centre of things was London and not Birmingham.

: Talk about the midlands and the south of England - it's bad enough sometimes between London and Aryatara!

S: I think that is persons rather than places. It's not as though they had all been born and brought up in Purley - then it would be understandable. I think that is just the persons concerned; nothing to do with local patriotism, except in a very engrafted sort of way. Lots of those who are referred to as 'the London mob' were not even born in London. Londoners could even say that they had been taken over by the men of Kent, with a little invention. Or the men of Cambridge. It becomes ridiculous. There are very few born Londoners even in the London FWBO.

: I was.

S: I was. I don't know about anybody else!

: I was.

S: You were; but that is only three present. All the rest, or most of them, are Londoners by adoption.

Sooner or later, this will have to become a very definite and genuine thing: that the Order, at least, transcends national frontiers. So we have a very good opportunity to put that into operation as we start extending our operations into Europe, especially in the overall context of the EEC. You wrote a little note about that in Shabda, didn't you? That was quite good: just from a purely FWBO point of view, leaving aside all the economic and political questions. I think it will be really good when the Order is a really Western Buddhist Order, whereas at present it is virtually an English, or at least a British, Buddhist Order. The [266] New Zealanders are more or less culturally identical with the English. Quite a few of our New Zealand Members emigrated from England anyway; Shoabir(?) is an emigrant, and Mudita is an emigrant, and Sadhumati is an emigrant. Any others? At least those three.

: I don't think so. There was ... some years ago.

Devaraja: I think places like Holland won't be so difficult, because the Dutch temperamentally have great similarities with the British.

S: They have the same sort of stodginess, eh?

Devaraja: They may, but they also have a similar sense of humour, I've noticed.

S: It seems to me that we shall penetrate into Scandinavia first. There are several reasons for that. First of all, the general set-up is not too dissimilar to that of England; and English is the second language all over Scandinavia. And, of course, in Holland. In Copenhagen, I was told, 50% of the population speak English. It is the second language in all the four countries - Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland - and in Holland, whereas German was the second language there until the war. Since the war, it has been English. So that makes things easy for us.

: What do you think will be the effect when the 'Western' Buddhist Order goes to Malaysia and places like that?

S: I don't know; I don't know. It depends on what feedback there is whether you get lots of Malaysian Members coming over here, lots of plump, exuberant Chinese, very practical and efficient and business-minded; quite fervent, quite intense - you know, like Dharmajyoti(?) - that is how he is. Except that he is not very business-minded; he is exceptional in that way. He is very idealistic, very active.

Also, I think we shall have to be careful not to become identified with any particular class. Again, in Finland, of course, they don't have classes, just as they don't in New Zealand; but here, of course, we do, and sometimes it seems as though, if we are not careful, the Order will drift into being a particular class. You can guess which one that would be!

Sona: It's not very difficult.

Devaraja: I think probably in a place like Finland, from your description of it, there would be not so much classes as professions. Isn't that so?

S: That is true; definitely there is a gradation of individuals according to their profession. The technical people and the scientists are definitely at the top, just as they are in Soviet Russia, apart from the party functionaries. Vajrabodhi tells me that, socially, he ranks quite high, inasmuch as he is a lecturer in the university and has his PhD and all that kind of thing, and in salary he is comparable to a top-ranking civil servant. But their status goes entirely by education, and salary, of course, is linked with education, broadly speaking. It is a rather managerial sort of society, a managerial meritocracy, you could say.

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Vajrayogini mentioned an interesting fact. She said that in Holland people are very down on the aristocracy, and if you happen to have an aristocratic name you don't use it. That is so in her case: she apparently comes from the Dutch aristocracy, but she drops the latter half of her name because it would create a negative impression on many Dutch people, so she only uses the first part. They are very anti-aristocracy. Whereas in England, that would usually go down rather well. That shows how different we are in some respects.

So I think we have to keep our eyes open about this and not allow the Order and the Movement to become, as it were, class-based in effect; and certainly not identified with any particular national outlook, or any particular cultural tradition or cultural assumptions or limitations.

Sona: It seems quite important, too, that if Order Members go to other countries they should be a bit genned up on the situation to begin with.

S: Yes. I am going to have to gen up Vajradaka quite a bit. And Vajrabodhi says quite firmly that he is not going to let him loose, as it were, on the Finnish Friends until he has had quite a few systematic sessions with him. It is quite easy to put one's foot wrong.

Devaraja: Yes; it almost needs a research team, or something like that, to go in and really ...

S: Or great sensitivity and awareness, and alertness; sensitivity and imagination.

Devaraja: In a way, the same thing will apply when - you have talked about how there is not much point in oriental teachers coming here and teaching straight off. They should spend at least a few years getting to know the ...

S: Right, yes. The language in the widest sense; and having actual contact. I think I can say now that I have got the hang of the scene in Finland; I think I can operate there quite easily now. But that is probably because I am accustomed to operating in a non-English context, having had so much experience in India and other places, so I don't find it very difficult to adapt.

Also, we have to avoid identifying the Movement with trends and current fashions. That is quite a danger, inasmuch as Buddhism itself, or interest in oriental things, is, in some circles,

one of the current fashions, one of the trends. There seems to be a whole complex of pseudo-liberal attitudes. We have to be careful not to identify ourselves with those. If you are into Buddhism, (it is assumed that) automatically you are into brown rice and women's lib and gay lib and sexual freedom and pornography, and of course you are pro-abortion, and so on and so forth. (Murmurs of assent.) I think we have to be really careful about that, and be very selective and examine each of these issues and points of view individually, and see whether they are in accordance with the Dharma or not; but not just adopt the general liberal, or pseudo-liberal, stance.

Devaraja: The terrible thing about the pseudo-liberal stance is that they are completely blind, often, to the objective situation. It is almost as if they fight off the objective facts.

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S: Like the people we were talking about - the Christian Action people. You weren't there, but Subhuti was talking about them earlier on; they have got this place and community at Bethnal Green. Half of them aren't Christians anyway, and they don't know what they are going to take action about. They are looking for something to do. Which is all very vague.

Subhuti: And under their umbrella they have got the whole liberal spectrum - women's lib, CND, and so forth. It really is as if they are trying to make Christianity relevant, in a very crude and literal way.

S: Well, they are trying to find a role for themselves, an identity and function for themselves. They no longer have faith in the old traditional one. In a sense, they are no longer Christian, really. Otherwise they would know exactly what to do, whether right or wrong.

Devaraja: It's the old ton-up vicar thing.

S: What's that?

Devaraja: Well, that used to be - I don't know whether it is so now, but you used to read in various newspapers about ton-up vicars who wore dog collars and rode motor bikes with ... and rockers on motor bikes.

S: But why 'ton-up'?

Devaraja: Because 'ton-up' means to do a ton, you see, that is a kind of mark of ability; it means you've gone over 100 on a motor bike.

S: Oh, I see, sorry. I am not quite up on my sociology.

Devaraja: That's why they were called ton-up vicars.

S: Well, we don't want any ton-up Upasakas, do we?

: Well, you've got that already. (Laughter.)

S: I think, therefore, that we are going to have to take European cultural attitudes much more into our purview than before. I think that would be a very good thing; at least European. We

could deal with America and other places later on.

Another thing that Vajrabodhi pointed out was that, in Finland, as in Scandinavia generally and, I suspect, in Germany too, there is a respect for professionalism in the positive sense; that you must know what you are talking about. Woolly flap is not appreciated. That is one of the things I am going to warn Vajradaka about. You must really know what you are talking about and be precise, and know it thoroughly. Vagueness and dilettantism are just not appreciated at all. In this country, people get away with it much too easily, but there much less so. They are much less tolerant of anything of that kind, and are much more challenging and critical, which is good.

That is why, for instance, Vajrabodhi is always very insistent in Helsinki that I wear my robes whenever I function with any group, or even for private interviews, because, he says, it suggests the professional person. This is a very positive thing so far as the Finns are concerned - [269] that you have a definite professional position. It is much more important for them than it is for us, but it is important in a positive way. They respect the man who really knows his subject, who is not just a dabbler in it.

Devaraja: It is quite terrifying, really, in a way, considering the demands that one can be about to meet.

S: But then, if you are into Buddhism you must know your subject. It doesn't mean being a scholar in Buddhism, but being very thorough and genuine in your understanding of fundamental principles.

: I am just wondering whether Order Members should perhaps check with you at the time. Presumably, if they are thinking of touring places, they would do.

S: Well, they certainly should! I tremble to think of letting some Order Members loose in a place like Finland or Germany, or even America. And someone going off on his own to ...

Sona: I was vaguely thinking of this some time ago - visiting some friends in Copenhagen and starting a centre on the way.

S: Well, if it is just to distribute literature and keep your mouth shut, as it were, fair enough! (Laughter.)

Sona: I don't think I'll be doing that, though. (But it would be) quite easy for someone to do that.

S: But Copenhagen is a very good place, as is Amsterdam, and I think those are two places where we could well have a very thriving Movement. According to Vajrayogini, the Dutch very readily follow or take up any movement coming from outside Holland. They almost prefer not to originate anything themselves. Look how Gestalt is thriving there; it was imported from America. Well, there are lots of centres and a lot of activities, lots of people practising it and participating in it. This is quite typical. The Theosophists have always been very strong in Holland, next to England and America; there has always been a very strong Dutch theosophical movement.

ABC: It doesn't sound too positive there, if they are not ready to originate anything themselves.

S: I think it has deep historical roots, because at the time of the Reformation the Dutch always welcomed thinkers who were not wanted or were being persecuted elsewhere, and they have got this tradition of intellectual hospitality and taking people in from outside, even taking them up. Spinoza, for instance, found refuge there; and, during the Laudian persecution, many English Protestants found refuge there, and so on.

: I also thought the Jews in general found refuge in Holland.

S: Yes, they did. So there is a great tradition of religious and intellectual tolerance, which is good. It is helpful to what may seem to be an [270] oriental movement.

It is important to realize, in this connection, that in the Buddha's time, caste feeling was terribly strong, and it remained terribly strong. Buddhism did its best to mitigate it; it was not observed within the Sangha, luckily; but this was one reason why Buddhism eventually disappeared from, or was forced out of, India - because of the opposition of the brahmins. And you notice that, in the enumeration of castes, it is the kshatriyas who were put first: the nobles, kshatriyas; then the brahmins. In the brahminical works, it is always the brahmins who come first. But in the India of the Buddha's day, the contest was still going on: whether the kshatriyas were to have leadership of society, as happened in Europe, with the feudal system - though with the strong influence of the church; or whether the brahmins would have the leadership of society. In the end, despite Buddhism and despite Jainism, the brahmins won.

Devaraja: Presumably because they had their roots in the whole ethnic culture, so that they had that foundation to fall back on always. They could always fall back to what they considered an ethnic status quo.

S: Right, yes. There is a story I was hearing the other day. Where did I hear that? Someone was telling me - it must have been one of the Friends or Order Members; I don't think it was anyone present - I think it was that that person's father or grandfather had been in the Great War, and had killed a German in hand-to-hand fighting with the bayonet; and, as he died, the German called out 'O Mother!' or something like that, and he had a medallion round his neck which showed that he was a Catholic. And the chap who killed him was also a Catholic, and this really struck home - 'We're both Catholics, both Christians, but we're fighting and I've killed him.' Is this known to anybody? (Silence.) No. Uh - I'll think in a minute who it was. It was somebody's father or grandfather. And this man who killed that German, after he came back to England, went apparently to church every day until the time of his death, and prayed for forgiveness for what he had done; it made such an impression upon him. This is quite a good illustration of rival nationalisms bringing people into conflict who ought in fact to be together - who are in fact, in principle, members of the same spiritual brotherhood.

I think it was Devamitra; I think it was his mother's father, and he learned about this only recently, and he was quite impressed by the story.

Devaraja: It is quite interesting that there was once this strange Korean guy who stayed at Aryatara, and when he found out that there were so many people who were Irish in the house

- that my family was from Southern Ireland and that Mangala's family was from Northern Ireland - he was astounded that we were (so close), because he had just come from Northern Ireland and had been studying there, and he was in a state of despair about it.

S: So it is very important that, within the spiritual community, these differences of class and nationality - and caste, if you happen to be in India - should simply not be observed and should not count. But they are so strong that we probably have to take quite active steps to discourage them. The problem hasn't arisen so far simply because nearly everybody in the Order is British. We have got two Finnish Members who are not actually living in England, and we have also got one American now, leaving aside for the moment the New Zealand Order Members, who are not [271] with us physically.

: (There is) the German.

S: Yes, Jinamata is German. It might be interesting to ask her whether she sees anything in our overall attitude which is specifically English or British! (Laughter.) Has she ever expressed any particular views, apart from our general woolliness?

: Yeah - the English are always downing tools for tea breaks.

S: Ah, yes.

: It makes for a lack of professionalism, a lack of commitment and dedication - all sorts of things: a lack of intellectual precision, of clarity.

S: On the other hand, of course, the British might find certain other nationalities too prosaic and lacking in poetry... a pooling of resources.

In Finland, for instance, the Finnish Friends who know a little about what goes on in England think that all these strikes are absolutely stupid. They can't think how we tolerate them - not that the government tolerates them but that the people as a whole do not organize their affairs in such a way that they do not have strikes among themselves. They don't think in terms of the government and the people, or the bosses and the workers, but about how it is that the people of Britain can't organize their affairs better? They are really puzzled and think it is stupid; which, no doubt, it is. They don't have strikes in Finland - or, I think, in some other countries. I don't know how they manage it, but they just don't have them.

Sona: I think they find unions are not very legal in some countries.

S: Well, they are not illegal in Finland. (Strikes) are illegal in Russia.

Sona: In Sweden

S: But they seem unnecessary; they seem an anachronism.

Devaraja: I don't know how far you want to go into the politics of the situation, but I think the reason for that is that there is not so much of a division between employer and worker in those countries. There seems to be much more worker participation in the running of factories.

S: Well, when the Finns criticize our way of doing things, that is partly what they have in mind - not that the workers should be forced to toe the line; they don't think of it in those terms - but that the overall organization should be such that everybody is satisfied, everybody has a say, everybody has a voice, and therefore things like that don't happen. It is quite amusing to go to a country like Finland and find that people regard England, industrially and socially, as a very archaic and backward country.

: Perhaps it is.

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S: Anyway, this takes us rather far from the general principle, but I think the general principle is very much to be insisted upon: that the Order as a whole, the Movement as a whole, does not become identified with attitudes which are merely British, merely English, merely Scottish and so on. I think it will help us when we spread to the Continent, as I hope we will fairly soon.

Has anyone got any connections with the Continent or any interests there? Is anyone in the habit of visiting regularly, apart from just holidays?

: I've worked in France a bit. I'd like to go back there.

S: I think that will be one of the most difficult countries to tackle.

ABC: Hamish(?) used to teach in Italy.

S: (to previous speaker): You know French, then?

: Reasonably well. School French.

Devaraja: We have got some Friends in France. There is an elderly lady who came to stay at Aryatara ... whom we are really very friendly with.

S: You mean she is interested in the Friends?

: Yes, she is very interested in Buddhism, but obviously she is not specifically interested in Friends because there is no Friends organization there, ...

S: But she gets the Newsletter?

: I believe so, yes.

S: Well, you had better check that, because she ought to be getting it. Any contact of that sort (is useful). Are there any other contacts anywhere else?

: I think there is a French girl who comes along to the Centre at Archway, who is quite interested in becoming a Mitra.

S: Well, there are two girls of French origin coming along. One is Eveline and the other is - what is her name? - the little woman with the daughter?

: Oh, Claire.

S: Claire, yes, she is French. And Marie is French, isn't she, Vangisa(?)'s wife? Though she isn't strictly a Friend, but at least she is a friend.

Devaraja: Even that's questionable sometimes!

S: And Padmaraja has some connections in France.

Subhuti: There is someone whom Devamitra and I met at the summer school, from Germany ... We must get in touch with him about the European retreat.

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S: Right! Yes. Vajradaka is having application forms printed, or they are being printed in Holland, perhaps, this time. We have already drafted something. They will be sent out in different directions.

: If you send some to London, we can distribute them.

S: Yes. Anyway, we have gone a bit over time. We have also gone a bit off the track. But, in a way, never mind, because this is very important. We are not even off the track; it is directly related to this:

"Just as, monks, whatsoever great rivers there are - namely Ganga, Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu, Mahi - these, on reaching the mighty ocean, abandon their former names and lineage, and henceforth go by the name of just 'mighty ocean', even so, monks, the four castes - namely, the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants and the serfs - on going forth from home to the homeless in the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Wayfarer, abandon their former names and lineage and go by the name of just 'recluses who are Sakya sons.' Since this is so, this is the fourth strange and wonderful thing..."

'Sakyaputta sramanas'. It is interesting that, in China, where family and clan feeling was very strong, the Buddhist monks actually adopted 'Sakya', or its equivalent in Chinese, as their clan name, their surname as it were, to emphasize - they couldn't get away from the clan system altogether, it was so strong, so they made a separate, non-hereditary clan of the Sakyas, which of course drew from all the ethnic faiths.

In Kenneth Chen's *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*, he gives some very interesting information about the Sangha in China during the Tang dynasty, and he shows how the family feeling was so strong that they could not get away from it altogether, so the Sangha was turned into a big family, and everything was transposed into spiritual terms. This is why lineages became so important in China. The Indians didn't bother about lineages in the way that the Chinese Buddhists did. Why is lineage so important in Zen? This is a legacy from China - from Chinese ethnic ideas: that it is important to be able to trace back your descent, not only your father but your grandfather, your great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather. So they did this within Buddhism too: their teacher's teacher's teacher's teacher. In India, this was not considered so important. But it became very important in Chinese Buddhism, because of the analogue between the Sangha and the big joint family.

Devaraja: What about the lineages of initiation from India?

S: In what way?

: The various practices.

S: But we don't find the initiation lineage and its importance insisted on so much in India itself. The Tibetans do, to a great extent, but you don't find much of that in India at all; and we find it very strongly in China and Japan, as regards lineage of ordination and lineage of the teaching. You even get lineage certificates and Dharma successor certificates. You never got those in India.

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Devaraja: I was reading that apparently one reason for that was that there were a lot of bogus monks and so-called monks going round China, exploiting people. They were really quite bogus. One of the methods of showing that somebody really was a monk was that he had a stamped certificate showing the lineage.

S: Well, you can have a lineage of bogus monks!

: Sure, but less likely to have the seal of a monastery on it.

S: Well, you can even have bogus monasteries!

Devaraja: Sure.

Sona: I don't think there'd be any point in - I don't know if it's possible - adopting a clan name in this country.

S: Well, we don't have clans, do we? They do in Scotland, there would be some reason for it; we could call ourselves McBuddha or McSakya! (Laughter.) You could be called Devaraja McSakya or Ratnakusa McSakya. But we don't have such things here.

Sona: I quite like to use my name, but if someone outside asks you ...

S: Oh, I have talked about this already. But this was before you were ordained, I'm afraid. I did say that, for official purposes, an Upasaka could style himself or herself Reverend, and then the full name would be, say, in your case - what was your original name? I've forgotten.

Sona: Raymond Fricker.

S: Raymond; Ray. So you'd then be the Rev. Ray Sona, or the Rev. Upasaka Ray Sona.

: Not Fricker? Not the family name?

S: Oh, what did I say? I may have got it wrong. We went into this with Buddhadasa; he was very interested about this. Let me have another think. No; Buddhadasa Evans, that's right. So it would be Sona Fricker, the Rev. Sona Fricker. Or the Rev. S. Fricker.

Sona: I thought about actually doing that - not calling myself Reverend, but when people ask my name just to say Sona Fricker; because they always expect a first and second name.

S: Yes, one could certainly do that.

Sona: It would be a bit more difficult in the case of some.

S: Why? Because the two names don't go well together?

Sona: Just the first time, you know, you'd get funny looks. I know when I introduce Ratnapani to people, (laughter) - 'This is Ratnapani', you know ... Actually, I'm not sure if they - it may be me, sort of expecting a reaction from them.

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S: It's also how you say it. If you say 'Rat-napani' you are asking for trouble. You should say 'Ratna-pani'.

Lokamitra: I think if I'm introduced to people outside as Lokamitra Goody it would be a riot. (Helpless laughter. Some comments lost.) There is more point, in a way, in just saying 'Lokamitra'; you know, 'This is Lokamitra.' But 'Lokamitra Goody'!

S: Well, I'm not very happy about the name Goody, anyway!

Devaraja: Maybe there is something to be said, if there is a necessity for two names - isn't there one tradition where you take that name and the name of the person who ordained you or your preceptor, or whatever?

S: Um - no. For instance, first of all we have to remember that, originally, there were no such things as special Buddhist names. All the Buddha's disciples had their original names: Ananda was Ananda, Devadatta was Devadatta, and so on. The practice of a specifically Buddhist name came only later, especially when, say, someone who came in from Hinduism had a Hindu name and he wanted to dissociate himself from that, so he took a Buddhist name, a Dharma name. In China, again, it became much more complicated. They had something like this - well, it is so complicated I don't know whether I can explain it. I will give you just a small example of the total tradition. Suppose you were somebody's Dharma successor. The Dharma is transmitted to you in certain verses, and those verses are explained. Now, in Chinese, the verses consist of various characters. So, when the teacher transmits the Dharma to you, he gives you a new name, one character of which is taken from the Dharma verse which he has just expounded to you. But it must not be a character which has been borne as part of his name by any of the ancestors in the tradition for seven generations back. So, usually, a teacher has a whole series of disciples whose names incorporate, say, the first character of the verse; then he goes on to the second character, but omitting, of course, those characters which are part of the Dharma names of the ancestors for seven generations back. So the Chinese have all sorts of complicated systems like that. They differ from school to school, monastery to monastery and lineage to lineage. Some masters do not use their Dharma transmission verses in that way; many do - the majority do, or did. You can read all about this in *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*.

: I think, if I remember rightly, in some Buddhist - I was going to say texts, but probably in

books on Tibetan Buddhism - that you often get a character mentioned and then his Buddhist name is also given; his lay name and then his Buddhist name.

S: Yes. The Tibetans do not usually use Dharma names, because their names are Dharma names to begin with, usually. The Thai bhikkhus usually do not use their bhikkhu names; they use their given names. In Ceylon, a monk often gives his disciples, for the first part of their names, the first part of his, like the German bhikkhu Nyanatiloka. He had a number of disciples - Nyanavira, Nanamoli, Nanaponika and so on.

Devaraja: Do you think you will stick with Sanskrit names or do you think eventually they will be sort of anglicized?

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S: I was thinking of introducing some other kinds of names, maybe some Celtic names, because we can't have Christian names for obvious reasons; we would have to go back before Christianity. I'll maybe introduce some Celtic names which have some significance or value from a Buddhist point of view.

Devaraja: For instance, do you think that - suppose, in the case of my name, would you maybe just do straight English translations so that people could sort of ...

S: Well, you can do it in Greek. Devadatta in Greek would be Theodosios. But that has a Christian connotation, too.

Devaraja: Theodosios! Well, what's Devaraja, then?

S: Sorry - Devadatta is Theodosios; Devaraja would be - er - Theobasileos, wouldn't it?

Devaraja: So from the point of view of English people getting their tongues round names, it is probably more difficult.

Subhuti: ... king - it's a god, isn't it? It is singular.

S: Basileos is singular.

Subhuti: No, the 'theo'.

S: Ah, 'theo' - but in the Pali it's the same when it is a compound.

I have also tried to keep even the Sanskrit and Pali names relatively short and simple. It hasn't always been possible, but in most cases they are fairly easy to say. There are no tongue-twisters, as far as I am aware. Aksobhya is a bit difficult, if you say it properly, but that is about the only one. Most people say 'Ak-shobi-a', which is wrong: it's 'Aksobh-ya' - the 'y' is a consonant, not a vowel.

Subhuti: When one is approaching foreign Buddhist groups, how should we refer to ourselves? You said that we shouldn't stress the 'Upasaka'.

S: Yes, I am not happy about the style of 'Reverend', for obvious reasons, but we have to find

something like that, to indicate that we are not just lay followers of the tradition in the ordinary sense of the term 'lay'; not just the occupant of a pew, as it were.

Devaraja: Maybe something more like 'Hon. Upasaka' or something; or 'Respected'.

Subhuti: If we're going to the East we can't mention the word Upasaka at all, because that immediately has associations.

S: That is true.

Subhuti: And I think possibly 'Rev.' might be the best thing, as far as they are concerned.

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S: Possibly, yes. 'Venerable' is usually kept for bhikkhus, and the Japanese married clergy are often styled 'Rev.' Their upasakas are at least potentially married.

Sona: When you give a talk at the Buddhist Society, for instance, on the billing would you expect to see 'Rev. Upasaka' or just 'Upasaka'?

S: At least 'Upasaka'. I am not happy about the 'Reverend', really.

: No, particularly not in an English context.

S: But I think, if one is giving a talk on the Dharma, and especially if it is for some Buddhist group, even outside our own movement - one must use one's Buddhist name. One should insist on being billed accordingly. Or if one is giving a talk on Buddhism at all, anywhere, I think one should use one's Buddhist name, unless there are very definite reasons against it. If there are very definite reasons against it, there would probably be equally strong reasons against giving the talk at all. If people are unwilling to recognize the fact that you are a Buddhist, then they are very likely unwilling to listen to Buddhism anyway.

This whole thing about caste and class and nationality stresses the fact that the Sangha, the Order, must be a spiritual community, not a subdivision of an ethnic group, or itself another ethnic group. It must be something other than that. It has been rightly said, in the case of Christianity, that the whole idea of national churches contradicts the very idea of Christianity or the idea of the Church - that there should be a national church; the church, if it is a spiritual community, must be supranational, as it was during the Middle Ages; not simply a different ethnic body, but not an ethnic body at all. That is why it can never be hereditary, which is what most religions and churches eventually become. This, by the way, is one advantage in having celibacy within the Order - you don't have any sons or daughters to follow you. You have to go on recruiting from outside. This is what Josephus said about the Essenes. He said: 'O wonderful community, that practises celibacy but never withers away but is constantly recruited and refreshed from outside!' Once it becomes hereditary, degeneration is certain. So if you cease to appeal any more, you just die away, and that would be good; better than having an ethnic pseudo-substitute. So in every generation you have to recruit afresh, which is good; otherwise your sons and daughters just follow in your footsteps - 'Daddy was a Buddhist, so I'm going to be a Buddhist too.'

Sona: 'I'm going to send my daughter to a Buddhist school'!

Devaraja: Do you think there's - because obviously there are going to be children - you know, I mean - we've got some already.

S: The important thing is not to bring them up as strict Buddhists in the doctrinal sense, but to bring them up in a sort of human way, and let them be around if they want to when anything Buddhist is going on, and leave it up to them; but not to exert any sort of pressure. And to make it a bit difficult for them - say, 'You've got to prove yourself; there's a bit of a doubt about you. Maybe you want to become a Buddhist and be an upasaka just because Daddy is or Mummy is; so we'll just have [278] to see.' But not automatically admit them because the parents are upasakas.

Sagaramati: Wouldn't it be better, in that case, to leave the children of upasakas with Christian names, so that they themselves would have to make ...

S: Definitely, I am not in favour of giving babies Buddhist names. If you notice, I don't give Dharma names to babies; I give sort of Indian names, but they are not strictly Dharma names. They don't bring in the words Buddha or Dharma, for instance. You shouldn't do that, because you are sort of prejudging. Suppose the child grows up and doesn't want to be a Buddhist? It may want to be a Christian, or a Muslim, or a Sufi, or a Marxist, or anything. So I give as it were ethnic names to children, but - so far - in the Indian tradition, not specifically Buddhist names. That would prejudice the issue. So usually to children we give names of flowers and jewels, and general ethical qualities, which are not specifically Buddhist. Otherwise, you give some poor little kid a name that means, like, 'The knower of the Dharma', and he grows up not caring anything at all about the Dharma, and that isn't very happy. Maybe he decides to reject it; he doesn't want to know anything about it, but he has been saddled with this name, 'the knower of the Dharma', or 'One who takes delight in the Dharma' - well, maybe he dislikes it, having been made to sit cross-legged from an early age!

Sona: I hope my daughter Shantih doesn't react against her name. She's pretty wild! I think she has already!

S: She doesn't know the meaning of her name, presumably.

I haven't performed many name-giving ceremonies, but you notice I have given the names Shantih, Lila, Ratna, Kamila and so on, which are sort of ethnic names, not specifically Buddhist names. You have no right to label small babies as Buddhists.

Devaraja: Whom did you name Kamila?

S: That was my niece.

: Oh, you've got a niece!

S: I have to work on my own family, too!

Devaraja: You're working on your own family?

S: Well, in a way. It isn't really necessary, very much.

Devaraja: Can you say more about that? I'm just interested to know something about your background!

S: I see very little of them, but each time I meet them I do a little bit, and it seems to register. I have never had any difficulty with them, anyway, no opposition, only sympathy and encouragement - which is probably a bit unusual.

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S: So we come on to the fifth of the comparisons of the Dharma with the mighty ocean:

"Just as, monks, whatsoever streams flow into the mighty ocean and whatsoever floods fall from the sky, there is no shrinkage nor overflow seen thereby in the mighty ocean, - even so, monks, though many monks pass finally away in that condition of nibbana which has no remainder, yet is there no shrinkage nor overflow in that condition of nibbana seen thereby ... this is the fifth strange and wonderful thing..."

This seems to be a sort of warning against taking metaphors and figures of speech too literally. Just as streams flow into the ocean, just as rain falls into the ocean, in the same way, as it were, many monks attain Nirvana, but one must not think of Nirvana as a sort of limited quantity which is either increased by more monks gaining Nirvana or decreased if anyone doesn't gain Nirvana. In other words, this suggests that Nirvana is not, as it were, a subjective state. It suggests - this is, of course, the teaching of the Theravada - that Nirvana is, not an entity, but certainly something which is not merely a subjective state of mind, however exalted. Nirvana is often called nibbana-dhatu - dhatu suggesting something which exists, as it were, independently of the mind. It is not just a psychological state.

Devaraja: We covered this quite a lot in the Mitra study group. There seems to be a tendency in the West to take a very subjective approach to the spiritual life. That is a very short step away from saying that Enlightenment is a kind of hallucination. (S. agreeing.) And ...

S: It is significant that people sometimes say, 'It's only a state of mind. It's merely a state of mind.'

One can say that the standpoint of the Pali Scriptures is, as it were, commonsensical. It is not critical, in the philosophical sense of the word critical. Nirvana is conceived of, as it were, as an object; it is spoken of as though it were a transcendental object 'out there', though from other contexts it is clear that it is not an object as opposed to a subject, but so long as you are a subject you cannot think of that which is neither subject nor object except as an object. If you say that such-and-such transcends the distinction of subject and object, the mere fact that you are speaking about it and referring to it makes it into, as it were, an object... But that is just the limitation of thought and speech. So, just from a commonsense point of view, Nirvana is spoken of as an object; but one must not start drawing any logical conclusions from that way of speech. It cannot but be thought of, or conceived of, or referred to, as something 'out there'. But, even though one cannot help doing that, one still must not take it too literally and conceive of it as an entity, something with quantitative limitations which can be either increased or decreased by any additions or subtractions from outside. Nirvana remains the same, whether people realize it or not, just like the ancient city which is there in

the midst of the jungle, whether discovered or not.

At the same time, of course, you notice that Buddhism does not use the language of 'Nirvana is in you all the time'. It is 'out there' all [280] the time; it is something for you to work towards, so it avoids this pitfall of the actual and the potential that we talked about yesterday morning.

: So it's better to speak of Nirvana, if you're going to talk about it at all, as an objective?

S: Yes.

Then the sixth comparison:

"Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is of one flavour, the flavour of salt, even so, monks, this dhamma is of one flavour, the flavour of release."

This is also very important; in fact it is particularly important because it suggests the basic function of the whole Dharma in all its parts and all its formulations; that is to say, that it should lead to liberation of mind - vimutti. Vimutti is the word which is translated here as 'release'. It is sometimes translated as emancipation or sometimes as freedom. So it is said elsewhere that from whichever part of the ocean you take a little water, it still tastes of salt. The ocean is salt throughout. In the same way, whatever aspect of the Dharma, whatever aspect of the Buddha's teaching, you consider, it is all characterized by a tendency to bring about release of mind, freedom of mind, emancipation of mind.

If it doesn't have that, as it were, flavour - if it doesn't produce that effect or result - it isn't really to be considered part of the Dharma. This is virtually the same thing as the Buddha said to Mahaprajapati Gotama, his aunt and foster-mother: the essential characteristic of the Dharma, in all its parts, is that it conduces to freedom.

Maybe we could talk a bit about this whole question of freedom; what is meant by 'freedom'? Freedom from what? Freedom of whom? What is freedom?

ABC: Freedom from the self.

S: One could say that.

Colin: Freedom from things conditioned.

S: Freedom from things conditioned, yes.

I think this is perhaps an aspect of the Dharma we don't particularly insist upon, in a way, perhaps because it might be misunderstood. Perhaps we don't speak very much in terms of freedom in our ordinary presentation of the Dharma.

ABC: It also suggests energies completely released ...

S: Yes, quite. The great danger is that, if you speak in terms of freedom, people could tend to think that freedom means doing just as you like; the 'you' being, perhaps, the purely

subjective, not to say neurotic, 'you', just indulging itself. So it becomes also a matter of understanding what freedom really is.

Perhaps it is a bit like what we were talking about yesterday - [281] artistic talent. When you are actually engaged in doing something, when it is operative, the question of seeing what it is doesn't really arise. Maybe it is a bit like that with freedom. In order to see what it is and try to put it into practice, ... freedom ... It's very difficult to see it in the abstract ...

S: Yes. People don't seem to talk much about 'freedom' now, anyway, do they? Not like they used to, in some cases.

Colin: Perhaps they think they've already got it.

S: Yes, maybe! Or maybe, so long as they can do what they like, they don't bother about freedom.

Devaraja: (You can) think of it sometimes in terms of no blockage of ...

S: Also sometimes a distinction is made between 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' - freedom from something or freedom to do something. (Anyway), this is certainly a quite prominent term in early Buddhism: vimutti, freedom.

: In the Scriptures, where 'freedom' or 'liberation' is used, it seems to be more (related to) a subjective being than to an objective state of affairs. As it says here, it is the flavour of release which ... situation ...

S: The word here which is translated as 'flavour' is rasa. It is lonarasa and vimuttirasa - taste or flavour of salt, and taste of freedom. The word rasa is the same word that occurs in aesthetics; aesthetics is rasasastra, the science of flavour, the science of taste. So sometimes it is translated as 'aesthetic relish'; it is much more than taste or flavour in the ordinary sense. It has a much more strongly emotive - well, flavour - than the English word 'taste'. And the different aesthetic moods are called rasas, aren't they? - asantarasa, sringararasa.

: (inaudible.)

S: Vira, yes.

Devaraja: The word sastra - is that the same word as when you have the sastras?

S: Not quite; it's more like a sort of science. It doesn't necessarily imply any particular text. It conveys what we convey by the suffix -ology.

Subhuti: I think the word freedom - the whole question of freedom - has become a political one. It has become so vexed and so questionable that it is almost not worth (using) those terms.

S: Probably what has become its equivalent for us is 'deconditioning', (the state of) not being conditioned. This seems to be the equivalent for us. Absence of conditioning; or even spontaneity, or even getting your energy out!

Devaraja: That's a bit dangerous!

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: Freedom from birth and death.

S: Freedom from birth and death, yes. Also, I think, much of the sense of this archaic term *vimutti* is conveyed when we speak in terms of growth and development. In fact, that is a more positive way of speaking of the same thing. Anyway, 'freedom' in the sense of simply becoming 'free from' is a bit negative. How do you become 'free from'? It is not just a simple matter of breaking away but of developing to a higher level, achieving a higher level, attaining a higher level. So really you could say that the concept of freedom, of becoming free and being liberated, was contained in the idea or concept of growth and development and the Higher Evolution. Perhaps this is also one reason why we don't find it so necessary to refer to 'freedom' in the abstract or freedom as an ideal. We have got part of the sense of freedom in the concept of not being conditioned, and part of it in the whole conception or ideal of growth and development, and Higher Evolution generally.

Devaraja: You talked about getting the energies going. That seemed to be quite prominent - certainly in the *Dhammapada* ... *virya*, stirred-up energies ...

S: R... really is aroused energy. It is not so much getting your energy out; it is more like making an effort, bestirring yourself, bestirring your energy. It doesn't seem to have at all the modern psychological flavour of getting your energies out. It is much more object-oriented. Very often, people talk about 'getting your energies out' as an end in itself, but here you are stirring up energy to meditate or realize Nirvana, and so on; so it becomes a rather different thing. Unless you have some really worthy goal or ideal, there is not much point in stirring up your energies. You wouldn't (know what) to do with them. They might just create havoc, or make a nuisance of themselves. So, unless you have a definite ideal or goal, there is no more reason for having your energies aroused than for having them inert; except that maybe you feel a bit better that way. But you might sometimes feel better just being inert, unless you had an actual goal or ideal. But simply to get your energies out can't be, in itself, a goal or an ideal or anything desirable.

Sagaramati: Would something like translated as 'flurried and worried' anxiety and things like that - would that be like having your energy out, without any direction.

S: Yes, or an aimless whirl. *Udhacca-kukkucca*, one of the five hindrances: hurry and flurry, or worry and anxiety - there are various translations - or restlessness and worry. That is the opposite state to *thina-middha*, or sloth and torpor. You can meet people who have plenty of restless energy, but they don't really do anything much with it, and in a sense they can't. It is significant that this is regarded as a hindrance in the Buddha's teaching.

So if you want to translate this particular comparison, instead of saying that, just as the ocean has one flavour so the Dharma has one flavour, the flavour of release, you could say that, as the Buddha said to Mahaprajapati Gotami, the Dharma has the flavour of deconditioning or of growth and development - that whatever helps you to grow and develop and to get rid of your past conditioning, that is the Dharma. The conditioning [283] is perhaps represented by last year's dead leaves, which you have to shed, and the growth and development by this year's buds and blossoms that are going to open.

One could also say that there is something suggestive in the use of the word 'flavour' of the Dharma, because a flavour is something quite subjective, something that you can only experience; it can't really be defined. For instance, there is a verse in the Dhammapada which says that the wise man can detect the flavour of the Dharma just as the tongue detects the taste of soup, but the fool cannot detect the flavour of the Dharma just as the spoon cannot taste the flavour of the soup. In other words, the characteristic of the Dharma, if you take this word *rasa*, taste or flavour, as at all significant, it means that the true nature or quality of the Dharma cannot be abstractly comprehended, but only by way of an actual experience akin to an aesthetic experience. In other words, you can't really define the Dharma, conceptually speaking. You have to say to someone, 'Come and see for yourself; come and taste it or come and experience it.' You can't really convey an adequate idea just conceptually, you can only give a hint or an indication, or indicate the possibility of experience. So the Buddha here doesn't speak in terms of the qualities or attributes of the Dharma, or the general nature of the Dharma, but in terms of the flavour of the Dharma, the *dharmarasa*.

In other words, if you want to put it really extremely, you could say that understanding the Dharma is much more like eating than like thinking. Perhaps we could go a little further - though perhaps this is a little fanciful: it is perhaps not a coincidence that, among all the flavours, the Dharma is compared to salt. According to Indian cookery and Indian medicine, there are six flavours. Let me see if I can remember them. There is the sweet, the sour, the salt, the pungent, the astringent; and there is another one. Can anyone think of it?

: Bitter?

S: Bitter! Yes, thank you. So out of all these six flavours, the Dharma is compared to the salty flavour. So, if we take this literally - though this may be carrying it a bit too far - what do you think it could mean? It is not compared to anything sweet, which is quite interesting. Neither is it compared to anything bitter. It is not even sour; it is not even astringent. It is salt.

ABC: In the Bible, the interpretation of 'salt', of course, is the only thing that gives a real taste, a real flavour.

S: Right, yes! It gives a real taste to everything else. So you can see that, without a pinch of the Dharma, everything else becomes flavourless. You could say that.

: You could also say that salt doesn't so much impart its own flavour as ...

S: Ah! Yes, you could say that, too. That goes back to King Lear and Cordelia a bit, doesn't it? King Lear asks all his three daughters how much they love him, and Cordelia says, 'As much as I love salt' - which doesn't please him at all; he had expected something much more grand than that. But actually it is true: food has no flavour without salt.

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: ... it has a medicinal value as well, as salt ...

S: Yes, salt also preserves. It is a preservative. Also it purifies. In many ancient ceremonies, salt is used for purification, isn't it? In Christianity, salt was used for purification, wasn't it? - or something of that kind. There are ceremonies in which salt is used. I think it is used in connection with exorcism; I think you put salt on the devil's tail. That is where putting salt on

the sparrow's tail comes from, I think; I'm not quite sure of that.

: Throwing salt over your shoulder.

S: Throwing salt over your shoulder. It is a purifying agent. But this may be becoming a bit fanciful. It shows how you can go on and write a very elaborate commentary if you really want to. But perhaps it is not altogether coincidental that the taste of the Dharma is compared with the taste of salt.

What is salt in alchemy, by the way? Sulphur and salt have a definite significance, don't they?

: Oh! The two things that make it up - sodium and chlorine, which are both themselves poisons, combine to make the relatively innocuous salt. That is not so much alchemical as chemical.

S: But salt and sulphur do have a significance of their own in alchemy, but I can't remember what it is. But that is perhaps going a little too far off the track.

So you need a tongue to appreciate the flavour of the salt. In the same way, you need a definite experience, as it were, to appreciate the true nature and quality of the Dharma.

All right, on to the next:

"Just as, monks, the mighty ocean has many gems, divers gems... even so in this dhamma are many gems; therein are the four arisings of mindfulness, the four best efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven limbs of wisdom, the Ariyan eightfold way... this is the seventh strange and wonderful thing..."

This is the first list of lists that we have had in the Udana, so it shows that the teaching is becoming more systematized. What do you notice about all these different lists? What are they lists of, essentially?

Subhuti: Bodhyangas?

S: Yes, they do make up the bodhipaksya-dharmas. It is one particular set which is the bodhyangas.

: Lists of methods.

S: They are all lists of methods, lists of practices. They are not lists of philosophical doctrines. The early lists of lists seem to have been entirely of this nature. I take it that everybody knows what they all are?

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Voices: Not all of them.

S: Some have been mentioned before in the Udana, others not. The four best efforts: we have mentioned those before - that is to say, with regard to skilful and unskilful mental states, the effort to get rid of unskilful states that have already arisen, to prevent the arising of unskilful

states that have not arisen, to maintain skilful states that have arisen, and to bring into existence skilful states that have not arisen. These are the four best efforts. The four bases of psychic power: that is quite an obscure one - I'm afraid I don't remember that. Let me see: the four iddhipadas. One is will, I remember that, canda. Virya is one. I shall have to think about that and maybe look it up. The five faculties and the five powers are the same: these are the well-known five spiritual faculties - that is to say, faith and wisdom, energy and meditation, and mindfulness.

ABC: They are both the same thing?

S: Both the same. When (the faculties) become consolidated into permanent powers - faculties that you are exercising all the time in their fully developed state - then they become known as powers. And the seven limbs of wisdom, I think you know those. I believe I have mentioned them in Mind, Reactive and Creative, haven't I? And the Ariyan Eightfold Way: this is the first time that the Eightfold Way has been mentioned in the Udana. There may be a reference to the iddhipadas in the Itivuttaka.

The important point here is that these are all methods, all practices, all things to be done. So the Dharma is compared to a great ocean in which there are all sorts of jewels, and the jewels in this case are the various teachings which are not abstract but practical, which constitute methods.

Any query about that? Perhaps it is interesting that those groups of methods are compared with jewels: that is to say, something very precious, something you find in the depths of the ocean - in this case, in the depths of the dhamma-vinaya. One doesn't usually think of Buddhism in this poetic way - of these lists of practices as being jewels. Usually one thinks of them as something rather dry and boring.

All right, then, number viii.

"Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is the abode of great creatures, therein are these creatures, - the leviathan, the fish-eater ... Gandharvas; even so, monks, this dhamma-discipline is the abode of great creatures, therein are these creatures: the stream-winner, he who fares on by realizing the fruits of stream-winning; the once-returned, he who fares on by realizing the fruits of once-returning; the no-returned, he who fares on by realizing the fruits of no-return; the arahant, he who fares on by arahantship. Since this is so ... this, monks, is the eighth strange and wonderful thing about this dhamma-discipline, beholding which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline."

This is the first time that we have had this list of the eight purisapuggalas, as they are called in the Vandana. In fact, it is the first time we have had a reference even to those four groups of Ariyans - that is, [286] the Stream-entrant or Stream-winner, the Once-returned, the Non-returned and the Arhant. This represents a fair degree of doctrinal development. In the very early texts there seem to be references only to the Stream-entrant and the Arhant, both in a quite general way and without being correlated with the breaking of a certain number of fetters, but here we get the fully-developed doctrine of the four pairs of Noble Persons, though the fetters are not mentioned here.

ABC: This was evolved in the Buddha's time?

S: It could well have been, but certainly it would have been towards the end of his life, if at all; and certainly, at the beginning of his ministry, there were just very general references to Stream-entry and to Arhantship, but not to the state of the Once-returned and the Non-returned. That constitutes a much more detailed classification. We can't be completely certain that it even was introduced by the Buddha himself, though very likely it was, but towards the end of his career. It is certainly quite early. But, in any case, the great milestones are, of course, Stream-entry and Arhantship.

Sagaramati: There was a previous mention of Stream-entry, wasn't there?

S: Yes, just of Stream-winning, but not of the four-fold classification. There have been previous references to Arhants, quite a number of them. But I don't think either the anagami or the sakadagami have been mentioned before, and certainly we haven't had the whole list of four, still less of eight.

One should try to realize the poetic nature of the comparison, because only too often we think of these categories - the Stream-winner, the Once-returned, the Non-returned, the Arhant - in a very abstract, schematic way; but that is not how they are presented in this comparison at all. The dharma-vinaya itself - the whole teaching of the Buddha - is represented as a vast ocean, and swimming about, as it were, in the depths of that vast ocean, are these enormous creatures, these great spiritual beings, that to ordinary people might look even like monsters. These are what we call the Stream-entrant and so on. But that way of thinking about them gives one a quite different feel of what they represent: spiritual monsters moving about in the depths of the spiritual ocean. They have their home there, they live and move and have their being there; they are at home in the depths.

Sometimes I have thought it would be good if we were to select from the Pali Scriptures all the more poetic presentations of the Dharma, and leave aside all the analytical, conceptual ones; and then see what we had left, and what sort of impression the material that remained - the poetic material - produced. I did suggest once to Gotami that she should make an anthology of all the stories in Buddhist literature, the parables, some Jataka stories and so on, and this is what I had in mind - an anthology of parables of all sorts. Otherwise we tend to get a very one-sided impression of the Pali Scriptures and of Buddhist teaching in general, because there are so many of these lists, and much of it is so analytical and descriptive in a very dry sense; but here and there you do find these more poetic bits. Perhaps it is better to have a general impression of these great beings moving about in the depths of the ocean of the dharma-vinaya, rather [287] than defining them analytically and ticking off the number of fetters that each one has broken. Of course, when you are in sight of the great ocean, you can't always see the great beings and monsters that are in its depths. You have to penetrate into those depths yourselves. Sometimes you only see these monsters, or have an inkling that they are around, when they come to the surface for a little while, and then they plunge down again; and you may not be able to see them perfectly or get a proper view of them; you just see a bit of their back or the odd fin, and you are left to guess at their dimensions - you don't really know. It's a bit like that. Otherwise you might think you knew all about the Stream-entrants and so on; and, after all, you know exactly how many fetters they break, each of them; you know exactly what each fetter means. But you haven't really got any feeling of what those beings, those Ariyapudgalas, are like.

Let us go back to the original description:

"...therein are these creatures, - the leviathan, the fish-eater, the monster, Asuras, Nagas, Gandharvas. There are in the mighty ocean creatures of a yojana in length, or two, three, four, five hundred yojanas in length..."

So they are creatures very mighty and powerful indeed. So the Stream-entrant, the Once-returner and so on, are like that, really monstrous creatures moving about in the ocean of the dharma-vinaya; even sporting there, you could say; more than a bit like the Loch Ness monster.

: How long is a yojana?

S: A yojana is generally considered to be the distance that oxen can pull a cart without having to be unyoked - yojana from yoke, yojana which is seven or eight miles. So if some of them are four or five hundred yojanas in length, they are pretty big monsters.

"These, then, monks, are the eight strange and wonderful things in this dhamma-discipline, beholding which again and again monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline."

Any comments or queries on that list of eight similes? (Silence.) What is the general impression produced by them?

ABC: It's very alive.

S: Very alive, yes. Nearly all of them are quite vivid.

: Why do the Asuras delight in living in the mighty ocean?

S: All the beings who live in the mighty ocean, presumably, delight in living there.

: Oh, yes, they do live there.

S: It's their natural element, just like birds delight in the air or salamanders in the fire; or buffaloes in mud. Asura is used in a very general sense, sort of a large and powerful being or creature. Also, [288] of course, there is the general suggestion that the dharma-vinaya is really vast, a bit like the ocean. : It's another dimension, as well; (different from the land).

S: Yes, right.

All right, what about the Buddha's verse? We mustn't forget that.

'It rains right through the thatch, it rains not through the open. So open up the thatched: thus will it not rain through.'

Quite a paradox. This, of course, harks back to the original incident of the monk who wouldn't own up; he tried to cover up, as it were, right until the end. So, with that sort of situation in mind, the Buddha is saying, as it were, that you will be protected if you open up; you won't be protected if you close yourself up. It is the open that is protected, not the closed, not the covered. So what do you think is the general application of that? People tend to think in terms of protecting themselves by covering up, but the Buddha is saying, as it were, that

you protect yourself by opening up.

ABC: He is saying the truth is your protection.

S: Right, yes! Or, as the Buddha says in the Dhammapada: 'The Dharma protects him who practises the Dharma' - dhamma rakati dhammacari. So that particular monk thought he would be protected if he covered up his offences, his very unspiritual life. But he would have been protected if he had been more open and had confessed and asked for help. If you cover up, the rain will come right through; you will suffer, you will be found out, or something will happen to you. The covering-up operation will not be successful in the long run. But if you open up, if you don't try to cover anything or hide anything, then you will be perfectly safe and perfectly protected in the long run. This ties up very much with the whole ideal of confession, of being open, of bringing things out into the open; not in a self-indulgent way, of course. Being open doesn't involve exhibitionism or anything of that sort.

What the Buddha is really speaking about here is openness within the spiritual community, not concealing one's faults and failings from others, and asking for help if necessary, and being willing to do that; which that particular monk clearly found very difficult, not to say impossible. Why do you think this sort of openness is so important?

Sona: To remove the feeling of guilt.

S: To remove the feeling of guilt, yes, to make a fresh start.

Sagaramati: (To free you) from past conditioning ...

S: Yes.

: To make any progress, you have to start from where you are, so that if you think you are somewhere different you can't make any progress.

S: Right, yes. You have to recognize where you are, even though it may [289] be a very unpleasant and even undesirable place, but that is where you are, and you have to acknowledge it; otherwise you can't move on from there. If you try to keep up a sort of pretence that you are not there, then you are in a very false position and progress is precluded.

In the case of that particular monk, since he was apparently a very bad and far-gone case indeed, he was merely ushered out rather firmly, not to say strongly, by Moggallana. One wonders what happened to him afterwards. But, apart from that, if in any particular instance one feels that someone is not being quite open or completely honest, or is trying to cover up, one should very gently tackle them about that, for their good and even for one's own, and for the good of the whole spiritual community. Because if everybody is covering up in the end, even to any slight degree, there is no real communication and therefore no community. This may tie up with that 'private life' micchaditthi - that what you are covering up is your so-called private life; it is the covered up bit that you don't want to open up for - well, not exactly for inspection, but you don't want it to be seen at all. I think I have referred once or twice before to somebody saying that, if you sit down to write your autobiography, the first thing of which you become conscious is what you are not going to tell! (Laughter)

But what do you think makes people like this?

Sona: The ego.

S: Well, one can say that; that is the blanket term ...

Subhuti: It's just a further description.

S: It's a further description, it doesn't really throw any light. But why do people not like to open up and uncover?

: It's just fear.

S: Fear, but why are they afraid? What are they afraid of?

: Fear of being damaged through their feelings?

S: But do you think this particular monk really felt or thought that the Buddha would damage him? Surely he would have realized that the Buddha would have been the most sympathetic listener: would have really wanted to help him and would have been very compassionate?

: I suppose he wanted to keep on doing what he was doing.

Sona: Fear of facing up to your karma.

S: Yes. It seems a very odd situation, really, though it is a quite common one, in a general, or at least mild, form.

: But people do get exploited or hurt through their feelings when they reveal things about themselves. We hear of it all the time, in police states and ...

S: Yes, but here we are talking about within the spiritual community.

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: Yes, sure, but I am just saying that maybe that is a hangover from that sort of situation.

S: Maybe.

: Surely it's a great relief?

: Yes, there is that, too, but I think there is that fear, that underlying fear.

S: But do you think that applies to people in this country?

Devaraja: Yes, I think it does. Maybe not necessarily through the state, but I think that people do often trade on other people's weaknesses. Our whole society echoes that; people sort of hiving off from each other so as not to be manipulated by each other.

: There's the whole thing of competition.

Devaraja: It becomes almost an instinct of self-preservation. I am not lauding it; I am just stating the way I see it.

Sagaramati: It seems to me to imply a trust, even a faith, in the other person.

S: Clearly, that particular monk had no trust in the Buddha - one might say no faith in the Buddha, no faith in the other monks, no faith in the Sangha; maybe no faith in the Dharma either.

: For him there was no spiritual community.

S: For him there was no spiritual community; he just couldn't see it. This is why no doubt the Buddha says: "Though, monks, he be seated in the midst of the order, yet is he far away from the order; far away is the order from him." For he doesn't really see it as the spiritual community; he maybe experiences it as a very threatening situation. But that is his great big mistake. That is why we should try to see and to feel the spiritual community as not like that, but as a very safe and secure situation, which means we have to have faith and trust. If we don't have that faith and trust which we should have, we can't open ourselves up. We go on hiding and covering. But, if we hide and cover, it is also a symptom of lack of faith and trust, which is one of the positive emotions.

ABC: I must admit I have felt very much not so keen to open myself up, because I feel as if I would be letting the side down, I suppose. I do tend to pick up that feeling.

S: Which side?

ABC: Well, the Order.

S: That is, in a way, a strange contradiction. Well, maybe that monk felt that sort of thing: he couldn't possibly let the Order know what a very naughty member they had. It would be letting them down. But probably that is a bit far-fetched.

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ABC: Well, it's not just that. It's also - I was very confused. I was frightened to open my mouth in case a load of micchaditthis came out.

S: In a way, so much the better, because if they had come out into the open, those who are relatively free from micchaditthi can help you correct them.

ABC: Well, that's what I would have thought, but the feeling going around then was that you must keep your mouth shut in case you put your boot in it. But even to make a mistake is a lesson for other people.

S: Yes.

: I think I know what you are referring to. What was being said was that you shouldn't be in the position of saying these things among beginners. There was no reason why you shouldn't just speak up. But if one is a bit confused, then you shouldn't (make) that confusion open to people who are only just beginning to find out what it's all about.

ABC: I think there's a difference between putting confusion across and deliberately opening yourself and saying you're not sure about something.

Devaraja: I've had the experience of saying something and then having it used as evidence against me!

ABC: Yes, there has been a bit of that. In a way, the communication in the Order hasn't been as good as it could be.

S: It means there must be a spiritual community.

Sagaramati: I think Chintamani mentioned once, when he was staying in Norfolk, that he felt like a little blade of grass (under) a couple of pairs of big hobnailed boots! I must admit my tendency is to become a bigger boot to give the other one a kick!

S: Well, maybe the little blade of grass isn't a little blade of grass. It thinks so, but it is quite a sturdy young sapling; it can really stand up against a few hobnailed boots. But as long as it goes on saying, 'Oh, I'm only a little blade of grass, be very gentle with me!', it will never grow or get strong. I think one has to beware of preciousness - 'My feelings are so tender and delicate, I mustn't expose them with all these rough, unsympathetic, insensitive people around!' I think one has to beware of that. And the sympathy that one gets should be of a more robust, bracing quality; not something tender and consoling and sentimental.

I think one should be very careful not to rationalize one's unwillingness to open up; saying, 'If I open up, then this, that and the other will happen to me.' In a way, it is much better that it does; it's the lesser of two evils, because you have been open and that is the great achievement which will help not only you but everybody else. And if you have really opened up, I would say that you can't be exploited through that; it's impossible. I think you can only be exploited through it if you haven't really opened up, or there has been some reservation in it, or if your opening up hasn't been really, completely honest and straightforward. Because if someone even tries to exploit you through [292] your own honest admission or confession, what does he make himself look like? It doesn't do any harm to you, really. So I think, at all costs, within the spiritual community, be open; open up, and never mind the consequences. Maybe that's all illusion, anyway!

Otherwise we are in this dangerous position of making endless excuses not to open up, so that we never do, and therefore we are never in a situation where everybody has opened up and therefore a situation where there is a spiritual community. You just get a lot of frightened people sitting around and covering up, and all blaming one another because it is necessary, and (thinking that) if they uncovered themselves and opened up they would all be hurt by one another - which is ridiculous. Just sort of open up and damn the consequences. You open up for your sake and for your own good - and, of course, other people's good, too. So the opening up itself is a great positive achievement, and it can't be negated by anybody's possible efforts thereafter to exploit your opening up. I don't see how they can even do that, really. So open up at all costs; there will be a much healthier atmosphere all round. I mean a real spiritual opening up, a very deep and genuine opening up - not just an airing of one's little weaknesses in a self-indulgent way, expecting lots of love and sympathy; not sort of baring your heart theatrically. Not that I am suggesting anybody actually does this, but you never know!

I think that brings us to coffee-time, and then we can go on to the next series of episodes.

(Chat about coffee.)

Devaraja: I suppose there is this ideal - I don't mean ideal in the sense of unattainable, at all - but I think then there is the kind of practice to bring it about. And I think that - er ...

S: Which ideal and which practice are you referring to here?

Devaraja: Of opening up, of being open.

S: Well, the practice is to open; actually to say something.

Devaraja: Yes. But I mean I have had the experience of things being used as ammunition and ...

S: I don't think you should care tuppence about it.

Devaraja: I know I shouldn't, but it affects me.

S: I would therefore suggest you haven't fully opened up. If you had, I don't think it would even slightly upset you. You would just feel really sorry that someone had behaved in that way, if it did happen, but you wouldn't feel upset yourself, and you'd be just as open. Anyone who does really use something like that - I am not agreeing, in this particular case, that anyone actually did, because I don't know any details - but if anybody ever did, in any hypothetical case, he would be an absolute rat, wouldn't he? Because it would be a most unworthy thing to do if someone had genuinely opened up and that was, as it were, used against him. It wouldn't be at all fair. But it wouldn't bother the person who had opened up. He would have opened up, he would be open, and he would go on [293] being that way. Sooner or later, that would have an effect on that ratlike person who had exploited his openness - or tried, at least; I don't think you can, really, not within a spiritual community, anyway, however imperfect, really do that. That sort of thing could only be done outside, where maybe some criminal offence was involved or something of that kind.

ABC: There's a sense of security anyway, in completely opening up. There is strength there ...

S: Once you have opened up, you can't be exploited. It is only when you don't open up that you can be exploited, strange as it may sound - exploited psychologically.

: I think a lot of sloth and torpor prevents people.

S: You mean just not making the effort?

: Yes, because it causes so much to happen.

Sagaramati: But opening up, surely - is that just saying what you think? You know, something happens, and you don't say anything, maybe for some silly reason like you don't want people to think that you're thinking that.

S: That would be a small part of it.

Sagaramati: Only a small part?

S: Yes. But, in this particular context, it means not being honest about your own weaker side and your own failure, or inability, at least for the time being, to even work towards the Ideal, not to speak of realizing it, and not honestly admitting that (you are) in the sort of situation in which help can be looked for, but to go on as it were pretending that you are not in that situation and therefore not ask for help and pretend you don't need help; just keep up a big act. It is like someone who is really going through it and is in a difficult state but he pretends he is all cheerful and everything is OK, and he tries to carry it off, as a big act, but all the time the fact that he is not what he purports to be is having its effect on everybody indirectly. So the best thing he can do is to drop his act and say what the real situation is, and say, 'Please help me,' or 'Please advise me,' or at least, 'Please bear with me for the time being. This is the situation; this is how I really am at present.' There is no need to wallow in it, or yourself to exploit it, but at least be honest.

ABC: I must admit I couldn't ... really in touch with the Dharma... for the whole of this retreat.

S: I can't say I have personally noticed, as far as the retreat is concerned.

ABC: Maybe I ... (S. laughs.) ... just my guilt complex.

S: It may be. But if, in any situation, you actually feel like that, it is good to say that you feel like it, because then other people will [294] (be able to) say, 'Yes, it's true, you have been - or you are - a bit of a drag.' That at once will lighten the atmosphere and liven things up. Or, if you haven't actually been (a drag), and if it's just you feeling guilty, or some such thing, they will say, 'Well, no; it's not like that at all. We haven't felt it that way,' and that will reassure you and you will get a more objective assessment of the situation. You may be under an entire misapprehension, but until you air it you have no opportunity of checking. But if people turn round and say, 'No, we were really thoroughly enjoying having you here' and so on, then you think, 'How absurd! I was under a complete misapprehension,' and then you really perk up and cheer up, and get out of your previous attitude, and then you don't feel yourself a drag any more because you realize that others don't, so why should you?

Sona: I don't feel that.

S: Maybe it is so sometimes and it is best to admit it and get it out, and say, 'This is how I am feeling. Is it so?' But, if it is so, the mere fact that you have said that this is how you feel, and other people say, 'Yes, you are right, you are a bit of a drag,' at once it breaks the ice. You feel better and they feel better.

: You're obviously not a bit of a drag because you think you're a bit of a drag.

S (laughing): Yes. You don't have to be bounding around being the life and soul of the party, though you can contribute in your own quiet way. Not everybody's way is the same. Some people are just quietly and cheerfully supportive, without saying very much. It depends on their sign! But if someone is being a drag and not only feels himself to be a drag but is felt to

be by others, it is certainly good that that is openly expressed. It certainly relieves any tension or pressure that may have been felt. If you just know that you are, you say, 'Look, I know I'm being a drag, but just bear with me for the time being. That's just how I feel. Don't mind' - then everybody is quite happy and you feel better. You feel the situation has been clarified.

But, even if it is not opportune to express what you feel, you should never actively pretend to feel otherwise. That is almost the worst thing of that kind that you can do.

: But what when you're in a position of responsibility of some kind - taking a class?

ABC: You've got to do it. Well, you're in a situation where you've got to bring up some positivity from somewhere.

S: There are several things to be said here. First, you should not, strictly speaking, if that is the situation, have allowed yourself to get into it. The second is that, if you make an effort sometimes, you can make yourself genuinely positive. It is not a pretence; you have changed your mental state. And sometimes the challenge of having to take a class will force you to do that. It will jolt you out of your laziness, and it is not an act; you are genuinely positive while you are taking that class.

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Devaraja: I have had this experience. I've heard, second or third-hand, that somebody doesn't think I'm suitable to do something, so I have tackled the person about that and he said, 'Oh no, no. I have the greatest confidence in you.' And I said that I found it a bit undermining, and he says, 'No, no, it's all right. I have complete confidence.' And then I hear they have trotted out some other reason in the next few days.

S: Well, you must thrash it out completely in all its aspects. Maybe they have confidence (in you) in certain respects and not in others. That means you have to have a heart-to-heart talk about it as regards the whole matter and not one particular aspect.

(Break in recording during coffee. Resumes in mid-sentence.)

S: - a penance upon him, or supposing he said, 'Since you are a monk of this kind you can't go on living with us for a while. You have to go into the forest and meditate by yourself,' then he ought not to feel, in those circumstances, that 'the Buddha has used my openness against me,' because that would in fact not have been so, in view of those facts which had come to light. The Buddha, and perhaps the other monks, would quite objectively be under the necessity of taking certain steps.

So it isn't just that you are open and then that's that. You might have been open about something which the community needs to take into consideration, and that may lead to certain steps or consequences that you are not very happy about. So this also must be borne in mind: that the matter is not necessarily closed just because you have been open about it. For instance, supposing someone owns up - this wouldn't happen in a spiritual community, but supposing another sort of situation - to having embezzled money. It is not enough just to own up and then that's that; you have got to pay it back, too. So there is that aspect as well that the content of your openness may be something that the community needs to take into consideration. So one must be prepared for that in all cases, and not think of it in terms of

exploitation, or manipulation, or taking advantage, or anything of that kind. You must be prepared for the necessary consequences of your own openness.

ABC: It's very much like going to the doctor, really. If you say you've got a disease, you may have to have an operation.

S: - to go into hospital, right. It is no use saying, 'I went along to the doctor and look! he really took advantage of me. He had my appendix out!' (Laughter.)

: There's an extreme case, isn't there, of one of the monks who had been a robber or a murderer before he was ordained and had to pay the penalty for that?

S: Yes. Though, as far as I remember, if it is the case you are thinking of, it was a karmic penalty.

So being open isn't an easy way out. The openness may lead into a whole train of consequences for which one must be prepared, if what you're open about is something of a rather negative nature and perhaps of a serious nature. Merely being open involves confessing once, but that does not mean that the matter necessarily ends there. In some cases, or even in most cases, it may well do so, but necessarily in all cases. [296] "Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now at that time the venerable Kaccana the Great was staying among the Avanti near Kuraragghara, on the hill called the Precipice. Also at that time the lay-follower Sona, called Prick-eared, was in attendance on the venerable Kaccana the Great.

Now when the lay-follower Sona, called Prick-eared, was in solitude and seclusion, this chance thought came to him: According as master Kaccana the Great explains dhamma, 'tis no easy thing for one living the household life to follow the Brahma-life polished in all its perfection, in all its purity. What if I were to get the hair of my beard shaved off and, donning the saffron robes, were to wander forth from home to the homeless?

Accordingly the lay-follower Sona, called Prick-eared, went towards the venerable Kaccana the Great, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated he said: 'Sir, when I was here in solitude and seclusion, this chance thought came to me' ... and he told him his idea, saying, 'Sir, let master Kaccana the Great give me ordination.'

At these words the venerable Kaccana the Great replied: "Tis no easy thing, - the Brahma-life with its one meal a day and solitude as long as life lasts. Come then, Sona, do you, as one living the household life, apply yourself here and now to the Buddha-teaching, just for the time being, to the Brahma-life with its one meal a day and its solitude.'

Thereupon the fancy for wandering forth was quieted down in Sona the lay-follower, called Prick-eared. But on a second occasion, when Sona was in solitude and seclusion (the same idea came to him), and a second time he made the same request to the venerable Kaccana the Great, and a second time the elder made the same reply, and a second time the fancy for wandering forth was quieted down in Sona the lay-follower, called Prick-eared.

But on a third occasion when he was in solitude and seclusion (the same idea came to him), and a third time he made the same request to the venerable Kaccana the Great. Accordingly the venerable Kaccana the Great gave ordination to Sona the lay-follower, called Prick-eared.

Now at that time in the district south of Avanti there was a lack of monks, so the venerable Kaccana the Great, at the end of three rain-seasons, with trouble and difficulty got together from here and there a chapter of ten monks and gave full ordination to the venerable Sona.

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Then in the venerable Sona, after keeping the rain-season alone and in seclusion, this chance thought arose: That Exalted One has never been seen face to face by me, though I have heard that that Exalted One is such and such an one. If my private teacher would give me leave, I would go to see the Exalted One, who is Arahant and rightly awakened.

Accordingly the venerable Sona, rising at eventide from his solitude, went to the venerable Kaccana the Great, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. As he thus sat he told him of his idea of seeing the Exalted One and said, 'If your reverence would give me leave, sir, I would go to see the Exalted One, who is Arahant and rightly awakened.'

'Very good! Very good! Go thou, Sona! Thou shalt behold that Exalted One, who is delightful and causes delight, calm in faculties and calm of mind; who has attained the uttermost peace and self-control; that naga who is tamed, guarded and controlled in sense. On seeing him do thou in my name worship with thy head the feet of the Exalted One, and enquire of his health and weal, lightsomeness, vigour and pleasant living. And say, "Sir, my private teacher, the venerable Kaccana the Great, worships with his head the Exalted One's feet and enquires of his health ... and pleasant living.'"

'Very well, sir,' replied the venerable Sona, rejoicing at the words of the venerable Kaccana the Great, and returning thanks, rose from his seat, saluted with his right side, set his bed and lodging in order, took bowl and robe and started off on his rounds for Savatthi. After going his rounds in due order he reached Jeta Grove and Anathapindika's Park at Savatthi. Then he came to where the Exalted One was, saluted him ... and delivered the message of the venerable Kaccana the Great ... and the Exalted One asked: 'Are you bearing up, monk? Have you support? Are you little wearied by your journey hither? Are you worn with alms-questing?'

'Yes, sir, I am bearing up. I have support. I am little wearied by my journey hither. I am not worn with alms-questing.'

Thereupon the Exalted One called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Ananda, get ready bed and lodging for this monk just arrived!'

Then the venerable Ananda thought: As to the order of the Exalted One that I should get ready bed and lodging for this monk just arrived, the Exalted One wishes to lodge along with the venerable Sona. So he got ready bed and lodging for the venerable Sona in the same dwelling-place with the Exalted One.

Now the Exalted One, after spending a great part of the night seated in the open air, had his feet washed and entered the residence; so likewise did the venerable [298] Sona. Then in the

night, rising up towards early dawn, the Exalted One said this to the venerable Sona: 'Be so good, monk, as to recite dhamma.' 'Very well, sir,' said the venerable Sona in obedience to the Exalted One, and recited from memory the sixteen sections of the Eights in full. When the venerable Sona had finished his recital, the Exalted One thanked him, saying, 'Well done, monk! Well done, monk! Well got by heart, well considered and reflected on, monk, are these sixteen sections of the Eights. You are blest with charming speech, distinctly and clearly enunciated, so as to make your meaning clear. How many rain-seasons have you spent, monk?'

'Only one, sir.'

'How is it that you delayed so long (in wandering forth)?'

'For long, sir, I had seen the danger in the passions, but the household life with its many claims and things to do kept me back.'

Then the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Seeing the danger in the world, knowing dhamma free from base, The Ariyan joys not in evil,
in evil the pure joys not."

S: There are several things to comment on here. First of all, we see the Dharma - we see the Buddha's teaching and his disciples - beginning to spread south. Avanti is in central India. You notice Sona says, 'According as master Kaccana the Great explains dhamma, 'tis no easy thing for one living the household life to follow the Brahma-life polished in all its perfection, in all its purity.' What does this suggest? It suggests that the person living at home can follow to some extent; it is not that he can't follow it at all. He can follow it to some extent, even to a great extent, but not to absolute perfection. We shall see later on that, even living at home, you can get a very long way indeed.

So what does Kaccana make Sona do? He makes him live the life of a monk before actually ordaining him as a monk. In other words, he becomes a sort of anagarika, in the later usage of the term. Also Kaccana says: "Tis no easy thing, - the Brahma-life with its one meal a day and solitude as long as life lasts.' Solitude - eka-seyya - which means one-dwelling or one-staying; singly dwelling. What do you think that means? Here is Sona, actually staying with Kaccana as his attendant. We also see the monks assembling together repeatedly and in large numbers, so what is the significance of 'the Brahma-life with its one meal a day and solitude as long as life lasts'?

: Being responsible for yourself.

S: Being responsible for yourself, yes. Being an individual. It is not literal solitude; 'solitude' does not really translate eka-seyya very well. It is the state of singleness; not being dependent upon others, as it were emotionally; not being afraid to do things without the company of others.

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: He is saying in effect that the Sangha is not a group, it's ...

S: The Sangha is not a group; exactly. The Sangha is not a cosy place to be.

: Why do you think Kaccana makes Sona spend some time as a sort of novice?

S: Partly because his idea or fancy for wandering forth is capable of being quietened down. Kaccana sees that and wants him to be really consolidated before he is ordained. Also, as we learn later on, there is a practical difficulty of getting a chapter of ten monks together in that region. So, even after deciding to ordain Sona, he can't do it for three more rainy seasons. So Sona is quite a few years on probation. That is why, when the Buddha learns that he has only been a monk one year, he is surprised because his behaviour and knowledge of the Dharma suggest that he has been a monk for many years.

: Presumably this is the same Sona as Sona the Zealous?

S: I am not sure about that. There were several monks of the same name in many parts of the Canon. I wouldn't like to swear to that; I'll have to check it.

You notice that the Sangha has also reached a fair degree of organization. The Buddha has permitted bhikkhus to accept others into the community on his behalf, and he apparently has already laid down the rule that only ten monks gathered together can do this, but he relaxed the rule subsequently for districts far from Magadha, and five monks could then admit. This is still the practice. They still follow the rule of ten within Magadha, even though, until very recently, there weren't really any monks in Magadha. But that was a quite odd situation; whereas, in Ceylon and Burma, five is enough, even though there are thousands of monks.

: For the upasaka ordination, do you just need one bhikshu, or do they have to - ?

S: Strictly, according to the existing tradition, one bhikshu is enough, or even a samanera. But we ourselves are developing another and, we believe, a stricter, tradition of having at the same time at least four upasakas present to signify that it is the Sangha; even though that is not required by the tradition.

Sona: What will happen when the Order becomes so large that it will be impossible for you to go and perform ordinary ordinations?

S: I don't know at present! That is one of the things that have to be thought about. But, obviously, some means will have to be found of getting together five Order Members - we might even decide to make it ten - and themselves being responsible for the ordination. But a procedure for that will no doubt have to be laid down. It can't be allowed to happen haphazardly.

:It can be performed by ... when somebody has a Bodhisattva ordination.

S: Possibly; possibly not.

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: We've already got the Mitra system.

S: Yes, right. That is already independent of me in some cases.

Anyway, we just note, in the course of this episode, that the Sangha has attained a fair degree of organization compared with before. The Buddha is, of course, found at Savatthi; he seems to spend more time there than anywhere else.

What is very remarkable here is what happens when the Buddha asks Sona to recite the Dharma. He has learned a whole series of Dharma stanzas by heart, presumably from Mahakaccana. This makes it very clear indeed that, even during the Buddha's lifetime, the practice had developed of the Dharma being summarized in verses - maybe by the Buddha, maybe by others - and learned by heart and regularly chanted and recited. We have already seen that this is what really happened on the occasion of the uposatha gatherings, and that these collective chantings of the Dharma stanzas were known as pratimoksha or pattimokkha - that being the original meaning of that term, as explained by S. Dutt. So here we see Sona, the monk newly arrived from central India, reciting in front of the Buddha the Dharma stanzas which he had learned, presumably from Mahakaccana, in Avanti. What is even more interesting and remarkable is that we have these verses in the Sutta Nipata: the Athakavagga, the chapter called the Eights in the Sutta Nipata, which is probably the oldest section of the entire Canon. So these verses are therefore very, very important, and we can be as sure as we can be sure of anything of this nature that they do go right back to the time of the Buddha, and that they do represent his teaching, at least in part. It is interesting that these verses represent a completely unsystematized teaching.

Has anybody read that chapter, the Eights, of the Sutta Nipata? It is quite difficult; the Pali is quite difficult, and the thoughts are not easy to grasp always, but they are not a systematization of the teaching. Those verses are so old that they are cited even within one of the relatively older parts of the Canon like the Udana. So, if we can be sure of anything as representing the Buddha's original teaching pretty faithfully, we can be sure of those verses of the Athakavagga, which at that time no doubt was an independent work and afterward became a chapter of the Sutta Nipata. So, when you read that chapter of the Sutta Nipata, you are very close indeed to the original Dharma. You may have it even in the very form in which it was, if not taught by the Buddha, certainly approved by him. He may have been responsible for those verses himself or a disciple may have composed them to summarize his teaching; but, according to this episode, the Buddha heard them and approved them, and approved the recitation, and seems in fact to have approved the general practice of monks getting Dharma verses by heart and reciting them to themselves and to one another, singly or congregationally.

Sona: Would there be any point in people nowadays memorizing a number of passages?

S: I think it is quite good to memorize short texts, and it is quite good to repeat them at the time of meditation and reflect upon them. I think this is very good. There should be a number of small texts that one does know by heart in this way. When you think of the enormous task that the early monks set themselves, of handing down all this material orally; and not only handing it down, but arranging it, editing it and collecting it, orally; it was a tremendous feat. It was preserved by [301] oral means for up to 500 years. This is just one particular collection, the one in Pali of which the Udana is a part, and every detail has been remembered and handed down, generation by generation. And, according to internal evidence, it does faithfully reflect the time. There were no anachronisms, except of a very general nature, like maybe adding on to a list, or something like that, when it was recited at a later period; adding a few more clauses and making it more complete.

Sona: The Tibetans, in fact, continued the tradition to some extent, didn't they?

S: Not in the same way, no. The Tibetan tradition was a literary tradition. There is very little in comparison that is handed down purely as an oral tradition.

But this was quite a feat - transmitting all these teachings simply by oral means. It meant that one had to be very careful and very scrupulous to get it exactly right. That is why the Buddha praises Sona: "You are blest with charming speech, distinctly and clearly enunciated, so as to make your meaning clear." Because, if you slurred the pronunciation, one word might be substituted for another in course of time, and that would change the meaning. So this is correct enunciation in the context of a purely oral transmission; it is very important that you should not say kama instead of karma, or karma instead of kama. This is very important and can change the whole meaning, and there is no written text to check yourself by.

: Has there been any of that distortion of meaning at all, through mispronunciation?

S: There has been a little bit, no doubt, but very little, compared with the bulk of the material transmitted.

: Presumably the sangiti were collectively checking the substance. They would all chant together.

S: Right. If monk So-and-so got it wrong, he could be corrected. This faithfulness of oral transmission is very important, and this is something that we need to attend to ourselves, in a slightly different way. Sometimes reports come back to me of what I am supposed to have said, and it is completely wrong - sometimes not slightly distorted but completely different, if not the opposite to what I actually said. There have been several examples of this recently. One has to be so careful to reproduce the whole of what has been said, and in context, and with all the necessary qualifications which I myself have used.

Sona: I sometimes think that it is better that people should never quote you, unless they have more or less got it written down in front of them in full context. It occurred to me that one could always say your actual words without mentioning your name in your own ...

S: Right.

Sona: Because often people just use your name as ammunition.

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S: They cite an authority to support their own point of view. Maybe not always, but certainly sometimes. Of course, in important matters I do actually write - sometimes.

I had to rewrite part of a report that was produced from someone's notes about the little talk I gave after my return from New Zealand. I actually caught that as it was being put into the envelopes to be sent out, and I just had to get that issue of Shabda taken apart and sent off without that report, which I then proceeded to rewrite, and it came along with the next Shabda. It was a quite honest misunderstanding - not even a misunderstanding, but certain emphases and nuances which were quite important had been entirely omitted, and the whole thing became much cruder and blunter, and even in a few instances quite wrong and

misleading. So now I have asked for anything that is published which purports to be my words is submitted to me first for correction. This is now the general rule that is being followed.

Devaraja: Maybe it's an idea to train some people as reporters, because I think it is quite a specialized job.

S: Yes. Well, we are finding people to report the Convention, a different person each day, we hope.

Devaraja: But I wonder if that couldn't be a particular function for somebody ...

S: Maybe. Some people are very good at it. But also, it is interesting to look at the psychological implications of the fact that one is not reported correctly. It is more as though one's name is being invoked rather than one's sentiments or convictions accurately reproduced. In other words, not enough care is being taken to ascertain what I actually said and what I meant by that.

Sona: I remember reading something - I think it was something the Egyptian god Thoth, who had got a ... , said to the king about memory - the king said that reading and writing had sort of just been invented - and (Thoth) said that this was just an excuse for ...

S: - not training the memory, yes.

Devaraja: That is quite interesting, because somebody was commenting that - we take notes and that has immense value, but some (of the Hindus?) commented that Tibetans, in their experience, never take notes.

S: Well, (that is not) my experience. They do; I've known Tibetans to take notes and even submit them to the teacher afterwards.

Also there is this question of selective quotation. There is a famous example of that when, after I had been in retreat for a year or so, I met certain Order Members and Friends, or it might have been just Order Members, in the New Forest. Was anybody actually there? (Voice: I was.) You were there, yes. So we had a little get-together over two or two-and-a-half days, and many topics were discussed, but in those days there was no Shabda, so no detailed report appeared. But in the Newsletter, one sentence was taken from this whole two-day discussion - a quote. Does anyone remember what it was? (Voice: I can't remember.) It was [303] that 'Everything can be changed except the Three Refuges'. So several of those who were present were rather annoyed at this, and said how extraordinary it was that, out of all the things I had said, this particular thing had been fastened upon and reproduced in the Newsletter entirely out of context. It almost suggested that the person responsible for selecting it was eager to get some excuse to change everything, or at least to change as much as possible for the future, whereas that was not the idea behind that particular saying.

: What was behind that remark?

S: Well, leaving aside the whole context of discussion, the general idea was to emphasize the importance of the Refuges. So some people thought it might be taken as providing carte

blanche to change everything, just like that.

Devaraja: I suppose they missed out your saying 'one might say' or 'it might be possible to say' or 'one could say' or 'in a manner of speaking' etc.!

S: Yes, right. 'Perhaps' or 'under certain circumstances' or 'in the case of some people'.
(Laughter.) Often I use these qualifications for obvious reasons, but often they are missed out.

Sona: One reason I mentioned before about people quoting you was that I almost envisaged that, eventually, a situation might arise like among the Christians, where one person of a certain persuasion quotes one small thing from the Bible and someone else says, 'Ah, but it also says - '. In the same way, someone could say, 'Bhante says this,' and someone else says, 'Ah, but he also says this.'

S: Well, the Bible contains different books written at different times by different people. But, even in the case of one person's utterances, this sort of thing can apparently happen. The only situation in which one is justified in making a reference of this sort is in reminding all those present of a certain general principle which everybody knows that I definitely do maintain, and that everybody therefore accepts; but (that does not apply) to opinions on certain passing issues, or certain matters of detail.

For instance, if you are discussing whether to have apples or oranges on retreat, (someone may say) 'Bhante thinks it should be apples'; there is no need to quote me in instances of that sort! You should decide yourselves, and those who want apples should not quote me to try to get things their own way!

So if what I am alleged to have said - or even what I did say - refers to a very minor matter, it is not right (to quote me in that way). I may in some cases have expressed a purely personal preference, which is not binding on anybody other than myself, and it is up to other people to make their own minds up as to what they feel about it, and sort it out on that basis. But if it is a point of principle, that is another matter, and there clearly should not and could not be any misunderstanding about that.

Sona: It might be an idea, at Order meetings especially, that if anyone [304] does quote you, that 'quote' should actually go down in the minutes; then a person has to be really sure what they are saying. (Voices agree.)

S: Also, the Buddha asks, "'How many rain-seasons have you spent?'" One's seniority in the bhikkhu Order goes according to the number of rainy seasons you have observed, not according to the number of years, as it were. Or rather the years are reckoned in terms of rainy seasons observed, because there is always a rainy season retreat every year.

And the verse:

'Seeing the danger in the world, knowing dhamma free from base'.

Presumably the base is ignorance; dhamma does not have a base in ignorance.

'The Ariyan joys not in evil, in evil the pure joys not.'

I think this is the first time 'Ariyan' has been used in this way. Originally it was a racial term, but in the Pali Canon it is used in the sense of a spiritually superior person; even one who is definitely on the way to Enlightenment. The Arya Sangha consists of Stream Entrant, Once-Returner, Non-Returner and Arhant, for instance; and there is the Aryan Eightfold Path.

: The Aryan silence.

S: The Aryan silence, yes. It means noble, spiritual.

Devaraja: So what was 'base', again? I missed that.

S: 'Free from base', I imagine, means free from ignorance; ignorance being the base of samsaric existence, the first of the twelve nidanas.

: 'Rightly awakened', in 'the Exalted One, who is Arahant and rightly awakened', is

S: Samyaksambuddha or sammāsambuddha.

: It's 'perfectly awakened' ...

S: Yes. And a private teacher is an upajjhaya, one who actually presides at the ordination. The other, the acarya or teacher, is a sort of assistant. Upajjhaya, or upadhyaya in Sanskrit.

: And acarya is a sort of assistant teacher?

S: Within the context of the actual ordination ceremony, his position is subordinate to that of the upajjhaya. Later, the system developed (so) that it was the seniormost monk in the assembly who presided, who was the upajjhaya. The acarya was your personal teacher, when your personal teacher did not happen to be the upajjhaya himself.

Devaraja: Ah, so I suppose an equivalent to that in what we do is that ...

S: No, we don't really have an equivalent.

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Devaraja: What I meant was that, in a way, you are the teacher of, say, the Mitras, and we in your absence perform the ...

S: Yes, but there are two, not one. So, in that sense, it isn't equivalent. But supposing there had been only one, it would have been somewhat equivalent, yes. The two Kalyana Mitras, within the Mitra relationship - though they are more equal - are in a way like the upajjhaya and the acarya, yes. But one shouldn't press that (analogy) too far.

Is there any further point about that whole episode? You also see the Buddha rejoicing in merits, even the merits of this very new monk, appreciating his recitation and expressing approval.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Revata the Doubter was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, contemplating his own purification in passing beyond doubt. And the Exalted One saw him so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

What doubts soever as to here or yonder, Felt by themselves, or doubts that torture others, -
Musers renounce them one and all, for musing They live the Brahma-life with zeal and
ardour."

S: This word 'musing' represents, but very inadequately, the Pali verb connected with the noun jhana or dhyana. It is experiencing, dwelling on, the dhyana state. There is an interesting implication or suggestion here about the effect of the dhyana states. What is that, do you think?

Devaraja: It is that they cut through all these doubts.

S: Yes, it dissolves doubts.

ABC: It goes beyond them.

S: And, of course, doubt - one aspect of doubt - is one of the five hindrances that you have to overcome before you enter upon the first dhyana; that is the hindrance of vicikiccha. It is sometimes translated as doubt, but it is more like indecisiveness; or doubting so that you can put off the moment of decision. It is almost pretended doubt. But if you get really into the dhyanas, that sort of doubting, or that kind of mental activity, disappears. So you cannot really resolve that sort of doubting on the intellectual level. You have to get into the dhyanas or higher levels of consciousness.

Devaraja: These two kinds of doubt that you have been talking about: when you say vicikiccha is that one kind of doubt, i.e. indecision, is the doubt that is talked about here another kind of doubt?

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S: The doubts that are talked about here - the notes do not give the original Pali word - seem to be doubts in general. But, in the context of the five hindrances, doubt, as vicikiccha is usually translated, represents a state of, as it were, culpable doubt. You are raising doubts and difficulties because you don't want to decide; because decision means commitment. It is not honest doubt - honestly not being sure, really wanting to know, really having a question or really having a doubt. It is dishonest doubt. It is that sort of doubt which is a hindrance, and that is included in the more general doubt or doubts that are referred to here.

Subhuti: As one of the fetters, which interpretation should we refer to?

S: It's the same.

Subhuti: The same as that in the Pali Canon?

S: Yes.

Sagaramati: Does that mean it might be like a temporary suppression of doubt, and that one then gets into dhyana?

S: Well, the doubt is a sort of artificial thing. It is not that, when you go into the dhyanas, you just suppress it. It just isn't experienced, it isn't there, so long as you are in that state. It has no actual existence, in fact. It is only dependent on your being in a certain lower state of consciousness. It is like when you feel very tired, dull and depleted, sometimes you start having doubts, just because of lack of energy and tiredness. When you get into a more zestful state of mind, they all dissolve. You haven't suppressed them; they are just symptoms of your rather lifeless state. So, as long as you can maintain yourself at that more positive level, doubts don't arise. It is not that you have suppressed them. You can't speak of suppression, any more than you speak of the symptoms of disease being suppressed when you are in a state of health. When you are in a state of health, the symptoms of disease are simply not there. You don't inquire what has happened to those symptoms when you are healthy.

Sagaramati: They seem to be talked about in that sense, in Buddhist literature - the temporary suppression of the five hindrances.

S: Yes, the suppression is temporary inasmuch as the dhyana state itself is temporary.

Devaraja: Would it be more beneficial to talk of putting them aside, as it were?

S: You could say 'putting them aside'. It is more like transcending them. But even transcending suggests that there they are, way below; which they are not. I think 'dissolving' or 'resolving' is better.

Subhuti: Perhaps it would be better to talk in positive terms, of developing confidence and -

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S: Right, yes. It is almost like asking, when the sun rises, what happens to the darkness? Where does it go, where is it hiding?

: That in itself is a feature of doubt, isn't it, that you can't believe in your own confident state?!

S: Yes.

ABC: What was that first example you gave of doubts vanishing when you get into a higher state of consciousness?

S: Just as, when you attain a state of health, the symptoms of disease vanish, but they are not still existing somewhere on some other level, as it were - they have completely gone - the state of health and the state of disease are mutually exclusive. So, when you become healthy, all these symptoms are dissolved, or resolved. There is no question of suppressing them; they are just not there, they no longer exist.

Sagaramati: I have tended to think that way - that, in a meditation, when it is good, I have tended to think, 'Oh, the others are somewhere down there, just lurking.'

S: Well, they are down there in the same way that the lower state of consciousness is down there lurking, and they are simply expressions of that. In other words, the doubts don't have a real existence. They are only symptoms of an unskilful mental state.

ABC: It is almost like a splitting up of energy.

S: Yes, quite. You get a sort of fragmentation of energy when the energy is very low and it starts disintegrating.

Sagaramati: Would this be like the distinction made between citta and caitasika? ... the concomitants somewhere else ...

S: Well, yes, one could say that. Just as, say, diseases are the concomitants of a state of weakened vitality. Also the fact that you can suffer from doubts is indicated in the expression 'Felt by themselves, or doubts that torture others'. Some people really do torture themselves with doubts. It is almost as though they enjoy it, sometimes.

Persistent doubt suggests great insecurity and anxiety. I met someone like that in Helsinki, but he was English, not a Finn. But he was like this: he had lots and lots of doubts on all sorts of very minor matters. He seemed to be a very insecure, anxious person. For instance, he had a strange thing about always washing and bathing. He went on the second weekend retreat, which I took, and as soon as he arrived he was in a very anxious state, asking where there was a place where he could wash, and was there a place where he could have a bath, and exactly where it was, whether there was enough water, and so on. He seemed to have a sort of purity complex, and that seemed to go along with his doubting and anxious attitude. It is interesting that he was English, not Finnish.

: This (Revata) is another example of just sitting and viewing his own attainments, career and development.

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S: Yes, 'contemplating his own purification in passing beyond doubt'. There is an enumeration in one of the suttas of the Majjhima Nikaya of the seven stages of purification. To the best of my recollection, these seven stages are mentioned only in that one sutta in the whole Pali Canon. But one of those stages, as far as I remember - I have not looked at the sutta for many years - is the stage of purification from doubts; but I would have to look that up to be completely certain. It is interesting that, although these seven stages of purification are enumerated only once in the whole Pali Canon, Buddhaghosa uses them as part of his double schematic basis for the Visuddhi-magga or Path of Purification or Path of Purity. The whole work is constructed according to the double framework of the three trainings, sila, samadhi and prajna, and the seven stages of purification. There is this double framework or double structure for that work, which is rather interesting inasmuch as the seven stages of purification appear only once in the whole Pali Canon. But Buddhaghosa seems to have considered them quite important. There is purification of morality, purification of livelihood, purification of doubts, purification of mind, purification of insight, and so on. I don't remember the complete list. I believe - again, I am not completely certain - that the teaching is attributed to Sariputta.

Also, in that sutta, the illustration is given of the seven chariot stages - that is very interesting;

have you come across it? - that it is like a relay chariot race. (Voices: Oh, yes!) It is the Rattapinita (?) sutta. And the way in which one passes from one stage of purification to the next is compared to the way in which one passes in that race from one chariot to the next and, in that way, gets to the goal. But though the succession of chariots gets you there, it is not one and the same chariot taking you the whole distance, but the first chariot leads you to the second, the second chariot leads you to the third, and in this way you traverse the whole ground. In the same way, the first stage of purification gets you to the second, and the second gets you to the third, until you reach Nirvana.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground. Now on that occasion the venerable Ananda, that day being the sabbath, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Rajagaha in quest of alms-food. And Devadatta saw the venerable Ananda doing so, and coming up to him said this to the venerable Ananda: 'From this day forth, Ananda, good sir, irrespective of the Exalted One and irrespective of the order of monks, I shall observe the sabbath and ordinances of the order.'

Then the venerable Ananda, after finishing his alms round, returned therefrom and, having eaten his meal, went to the Exalted One ... and said: 'Here, sir, I robed myself in the forenoon ... and Devadatta saw me questing for alms-food in Rajagaha, and he came up to me and said, "From this day forth, Ananda, good sir, irrespective of the Exalted One and irrespective of the order of monks, I shall observe the sabbath and [309] ordinances of the order." This day, sir, Devadatta will cause schism in the order and will observe (his own) sabbath and ordinances of the order.'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Easy to do for the seemly are seemly things, But hard to do are seemly things for the wicked;
Easy to do for the wicked are wicked things, But hard to do is wickedness for Ariyans."

S: So what do you think Devadatta was actually doing? What was the situation? The episode doesn't tell us the whole story, which we learn from the Vinaya Pitaka, but what do you think Devadatta essentially was doing?

: Isolating himself.

S: He was isolating himself, yes. He was sort of breaking off.

: He was trying to start his own set-up.

S: Yes. In the Vinaya Pitaka we are told how Devadatta came to the Buddha and suggested that the Buddha was getting on in years and should take things easy, and should hand over the leadership of the Order to him, but the Buddha was not prepared to accept that suggestion - in fact, he rejected it quite sternly, and said that even to Sariputta and Moggallana he would not hand over the leadership of the Order, not to speak of handing it over to Devadatta. And Devadatta was very annoyed and angry because of that and, according to other accounts, even tried to murder the Buddha or to have him murdered and put out of the way.

Again, one sees this whole question of jealousy that we talked about the other day, and

ambition and envy, and their really disastrous consequences. Devadatta wanted to have his own little show going. He first of all tried to take over the leadership of the movement as a whole and then, when that was not successful, he tried to set up a small rival movement of his own. And that was given expression to by his deciding to hold an uposatha day meeting of his own in Rajagaha instead of participating in the one held by the Buddha and all the other bhikkhus. Apparently he had a little following of his own, which didn't last very long. So he was going to celebrate the uposatha day - the day instituted, ironically enough, by the Buddha - and presumably recite the Buddha's own Dharma stanzas, but in a separate, breakaway meeting.

ABC: What is the translation of Devadatta?

S: 'Given by God'. Usually this sort of name is given to children who are born of their parents long after the parents have given up hope of having any children; again, like our 'Theodosius'.

You notice Devadatta can't as it were set up an altogether separate movement or spiritual tradition of his own; he is not capable of doing that. He has to try to break off a fragment of the Buddha's movement and set himself up as head of that. And what is the Buddha's comment on that?

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'Easy to do for the seemly are seemly things, But hard to do are seemly things for the wicked; Easy to do for the wicked are wicked things, But hard to do is wickedness for Ariyans.'

The Buddha, in other words, doesn't react; he just makes this quite objective general comment on the situation.

Ananda refers to sanghabheda, which means schism in the Order. It is quite important to understand what that actually means. At present, you might say that in the East the Order as a whole is in a state of schism - that is to say, the bhikshu sangha. The most important sign of schism is not just that the uposatha days are not held in common but that the bhikkhus do not sit together to give ordinations. If any group of bhikkhus do not agree to sit together with any other group of bhikkhus to confer ordinations jointly, they are considered to be in a condition of sanghabheda, and this is of course the position all over the East today. For instance, in Ceylon there are three or four nikayas, and members of those nikayas do not sit together for ordinations. So technically there is a state of sanghabheda - but this has been accepted for centuries.

It is the same in all the other Buddhist countries where there is a monastic order.

: Is that true in Tibet, for instance?

S: There the position is much more complicated. If one wants to be very technical - this is a matter of pure technicality - it is extremely doubtful whether there are any bhikkhus in Tibet at all. But if one wants to be very, very technical, you could probably say that about bhikkhus everywhere in the Buddhist world. So what does that prove? You can't just go by technicalities. For instance, there is one line of ordination of bhikkhus in Tibet - that followed by the Nyingmapa bhikkhus - which traces itself back to a chapter of only three bhikkhus, as far as I remember - two from Tibet and one from China - who got themselves together after a

great persecution and started ordaining fresh monks. But that was quite irregular, technically speaking, but one whole line of the Sangha in Tibet comes from that irregular chapter - technically irregular; but they all observe the rules. If one goes back into the past, there are lots of little flaws like that in almost everybody's lineage. As I said, you can't go by technicalities.

Anyway, ordination is the most important of what are known as the sanghakammas - the acts of the Sangha in its collective capacity. So it is a state of schism, a state of sanghabheda, when different groups of bhikkhus do not perform these sanghakammas collectively but separate to perform them. And the uposatha day observance, of course, and the recitation of the pattimokkha, is one of the sanghakammas.

: Would you say that situation in the East is starting to change?

S: A little, yes. I mentioned the other day that there had been a sort of joint ordination a few years ago of which I heard, when monks of two different nikayas in Ceylon got together and jointly conferred an ordination. This would not have happened before. I don't think it is becoming general; there was just this odd instance, but it is significant. And in India, it usually isn't observed, I must say. For instance, at my [311] own bhikkhu ordination, bhikkhus of several nikayas participated. But the ordination was considered to be held under the auspices of the nikaya of the upajjhaya who presided, but bhikkhus of several different nikayas participated. That is because, in India, bhikkhus who live and work in India realize the ridiculousness of these differences, and they just refuse to bother about them any more; so, so far as they are concerned, the sanghabhedas don't exist. When they go back home, say, to Ceylon or Burma or Thailand, they have to conform to them, but in India they won't, or don't.

On the whole, in the Thai temple in Bodh-gaya, I think any ordinations they give are restricted - the bhikkhu sangha on those occasions is restricted to their own monks from Thailand and those whom they have ordained; they will not allow others to participate. But that is a state of technical sanghabheda. They may be personally very friendly. One should not make that mistake. Monks who are technically in a state of sanghabheda with each other may be personally completely friendly and may co-operate in Dharma activities and so on. It is not like a schism in the Christian church. They may be perfectly good friends, and may be going around preaching together or working for the Dharma together, but when it comes to the occasion of the sanghakamma they will not sit together for that.

Sona: What were the bases for their schisms?

S: They go back in history. They are usually the result of efforts to purify the Sangha. You know, some of them became dissatisfied with the state of the Sangha and imported new monks, supposedly purer and stricter monks, from elsewhere, to re-ordain everybody, and some refused to be re-ordained, saying that they were all right anyway. So you have a division between the new and the old, the purified and the unpurified, as it were. That is the state in Ceylon and in Thailand, too. For instance, King Mindon(?), who had been a monk for many years, started to have serious doubts as to whether the bhikkhus in Thailand were really properly ordained. He went into this very thoroughly and after he became king he used his influence to get a large section of the sangha re-ordained by very strict monks from elsewhere, and that gave rise to the dhammayutika nikaya. But the majority who remained

un-re-ordained became known as the mahanikaya, and the dhammayutika would not sit for sanghakammas with the followers of the mahanikaya, considering that they were not fit followers of the Vinaya and therefore not real monks. But sometimes those accusations are mutual. It all becomes rather ridiculous if you take it very literally.

Anyway, Devadatta started all that. Devadatta, of course, held his separate uposatha ceremony in Rajagaha itself, but even if he had gone outside it would have been a schism on account of his mental attitude. Whereas Kaccana, who was some distance from the Buddha, in the previous episode, would presumably have been holding uposathas there with the monks in that locality, simply because they were separated from the Buddha by a great distance. But when they came into the Buddha's presence, obviously they joined in the celebration there. So the fact that you are having a separate celebration for reasons of distance does not constitute a sanghabheda. Do you think we have gone into that sufficiently? Maybe we ought to go a little more into the question why Devadatta created that schism.

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It is quite important. He was basically, it seems, if we go into the early episodes, after the leadership. The Buddha himself very clearly said on one occasion, 'I do not consider that I lead the Sangha. If anyone considers that he leads the Sangha, let him come forth.' He himself said that he did not consider that he led the Sangha. Obviously, he was the guide of the Sangha and everybody looked up to him, but he wasn't a sort of boss or party leader, as it were. He had initiated it and he had taught everybody in it, but he was not the leader.

Devaraja: He was ... letting people take the responsibility.

S: Yes. There were two extremes. One is the extreme of the Buddha himself being the leader; the other is the extreme of chaos, with everybody going his own way - as Devadatta, in fact, did or tried to do. The fact that everybody is responsible for his own self doesn't mean that you should start behaving like Devadatta. It is a very difficult middle way - the stability and harmony of the spiritual community which comes about without having a leader and also without breaking up into fragments. But this is what being or having a spiritual community necessarily involves; it can't be a flock of sheep under a shepherd, nor can it be sheep all going their own way and straying.

: That really depends on ...

S: - not having sheep at all! What were you going to say?

: It really depends on the sangha being in a certain state of mind, a certain state of consciousness, where those things just don't ...

S: Where you don't need a leader and where you keep naturally together because you are in the same state of mind, following the same way of life.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was going his rounds among the Kosalans together with a great number of monks.

And on that occasion a number of lads not far from the Exalted One were using abusive speech and going to excess therein. And the Exalted One, seeing them doing so, at that time,

seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

With wandering wits the wiseacres range all the field of talk; With mouths agape to full extent, what leads them on they know not.'

S: People just don't know why they go on talking and talking. I remember being really puzzled by this question when I was a very small child. It was one of the things that I really wondered about, when I was not much more than an infant - how adults could spend so much time in talking. [313] I noticed it within my own family, especially the womenfolk - how they used to go on talking and talking about all sorts of what seemed to me very uninteresting things, hour after hour, when they met together. I just could not understand this - how they could keep it up and what they got out of it. It seemed very puzzling. What is it that 'leads them on', as the Buddha says?

'With wandering wits the wiseacres'

very ironic, this ...

'range all the field of talk; With mouths agape to full extent, what leads them on they know not.'

What is it that leads them on? What is the Buddha really referring to? Perhaps we can call it neurotic verbosity. Some people can't stop talking. I think I have gone into this before, citing one or two instances. Sometimes it is a sort of abortive, or aborted, confession. I gave as an example of this a woman I knew, quite an old woman, who talked and talked and talked all day when you went to see her, without stopping. She did this with everybody. In the end, she did get round to confessing that she had murdered her husband, years and years before. She didn't confess it to me, but to a friend of mine.

: Did he ... ?

S: Ah, no.

: Or ...?

S: No - no! She was Canadian, not English. But sometimes it's sad that the talking and talking represents a concrete effort to come to the point and a constant failure to do so. No doubt she didn't know what she wanted to say, but she wanted to confess that. But perhaps this is so only in some cases. Sometimes it's just a desire to fill up the time, a sort of contact, a fear of being left on your own, with nothing to say and nothing to do.

: Sometimes to avoid even dissension(?)

S: Yes. Sometimes to avoid communication.

: As someone once put it: to fill up the space where otherwise mind might be.

S: Hm. That reminds me of a story about a woman who was asked why she always went on with her knitting while she was talking, so she said that if she didn't carry on with her knitting

while she was talking she wouldn't have anything to think about. (Prolonged laughter.)

: Another woman was asked what she thought about a certain topic. She answered, 'How do I know until I've said something about it?' (Laughter, S. joining in.)

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ABC: That seems to suggest that she's just talking her own thoughts out ... instead of thinking things out before she says anything.

S: Someone once made a distinction between writers who thought out what they wanted to write about before writing and those who did their thinking with their pen in their hand. That is much the same sort of distinction.

Devaraja: That can be quite valuable - doing your thinking with pen in hand. It's like sometimes it helps one to see an overall - S: Well, when you actually have to put it down in words, in black and white, you sometimes realize you haven't any thoughts, in fact, about that particular topic. That itself is a quite useful realization, whereas beforehand you might have thought that you did have thoughts. But then you realize, no, you just had vague feelings or reactions.

Perhaps we don't need to flog that particular (subject any further).

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Culapanthaka was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, with mindfulness set up in front of him. And the Exalted One, seeing him so doing, at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

With mind and body firmly set, Standing, seated or lying down, If a monk should set up mindfulness, He'd win the prize in first and last. And he, thus winning excellence, Beyond the Death King's sight would go.'

S: Here again, the importance of mindfulness is stressed, whatsoever one is doing or not doing. According to the Commentary, 'He'd win the prize in first and last' means 'in meditation as well as in insight', but that could be just the Commentary's rather technical interpretation.

'And he, thus winning excellence, Beyond the Death King's sight would go',

beyond the sight of all conditioned existence; his track would not be perceptible.

Sona: When it says 'mindfulness set up in front of him', does it refer to mindfulness in general, or mindfulness of the in-and-out breath?

S: It probably includes the mindfulness of the in-and-out breath too. Oh, no; it doesn't say 'in front of him', does it? Just 'set up'. That [315] is patthana, established in the sense of practice.

: It does say 'in front of him'.

S: Does it? Ah, yes, in the text, but not in the verse. The text represents him as 'sitting cross-legged' and 'setting up mindfulness in front of him'. Yes, this would refer to concentrating on the in-and-out breath; but the Buddha's udana refers to the monk practising the satipatthana in general, and being aware of all the different postures and so on. So 'in front' is not mentioned; this is mindfulness in general, which may or may not include the mindfulness of breathing.

: Yes, it says 'standing, seated or lying down', which would imply general mindfulness.

S: Yes, right.

Sona: Also, it ... a previous ..., where it says 'mindfulness of body and restraining the senses', then a monk could attain Nirvana.

S: Yes. Any query on that little episode?

: In the footnote to 'Culapanthaka', it says he was: 'Ranked etad agga, of those skilled in creating shapes of themselves...' What's that?

S: That is to say, duplicates of their own bodies, as it were, which could be perceived by other people, quite possibly in different places.

: 'Mental evolution' is quite interesting. What is the ...?

S: I'm not sure what the Pali equivalent or original of that is. It could be simply bhavana, mental development, which is a term for meditation in general, and obviously only an expert in meditation in general would be able to create psychic replicas of himself. Yes, it probably is bhavana.

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'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Vesali in Great Wood, at the House of the Peaked Roof.

Now the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Vesali to quest for alms. After going his rounds in Vesali, returning and eating his meal, he called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Ananda, take a mat. I will go to Capala Shrine for the noonday rest.'

'Very well sir,' said the venerable Ananda in reply to the Exalted One, and taking a mat he followed in the footsteps of the Exalted One.

Now when the Exalted One reached Capala Shrine, he sat down on the seat made ready. And the venerable Ananda, saluting the Exalted One, sat down at one side. As he thus sat, the Exalted One said this to the venerable Ananda: 'Delightful, Ananda, is Vesali! Delightful are the Shrine of Udena and the Gotamaka Shrine. Delightful is the Shrine of Seven Mangoes, the Shrine of Many Sons, of Sarandada! Delightful is Capala Shrine!

Whosoever, Ananda, has made to become, made much of, applied himself to, made a basis of, stood upon, increased and fully undertaken the four bases of psychic power, - such an one, if he so wished, might remain (on earth) for his full span of life, or for what is left of it. Now, Ananda, the Wayfarer has made to become ... fully undertaken the four bases of psychic power, and if he chooses he can remain for his full span of life or for what is left of it.'

Then, although so broad a hint was dropped by the Exalted One, though so clear and plain was his meaning, yet could not the venerable Ananda penetrate his meaning. So he begged not the Exalted One, 'Sir, let the Exalted One remain for the full span of life. Let the Wellfarer remain for the rest of his span of life, for the profit of many folk, for the happiness of many folk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare and profit and happiness of devas and mankind,' so far was his mind misguided by Mara.

Then a second time the Exalted One said to the venerable Ananda: 'Delightful is Vesali, Ananda! ... Whosoever has made to become ... the four bases of psychic power ... might remain on earth for his full span of life... The Wayfarer ... if he chooses can remain for his full span of life or for what is left [317] of it.' And a second time the venerable Ananda (failed to grasp his meaning).

Then a third time also the Exalted One repeated his words ... and a third time the venerable Ananda (failed to grasp his meaning), so far was he misguided by Mara.

Thereupon the Exalted One said to the venerable Ananda, 'Go, Ananda! Do that for which you deem it the proper time.'

'Very well, sir' replied the venerable Ananda to the Exalted One, and rising from his seat he saluted the Exalted One with his right side and went away and sat down at the root of a tree not far off.

Now Mara, the Evil One, not long after the venerable Ananda had gone, came to the Exalted One, and on coming to him said this:

'Now let the Exalted One pass away! Now let the Wellfarer pass away! Now, sir, is the time for the passing of the Exalted One! Thus was it spoken, sir, by the Exalted One: "O Evil One, I shall not pass away till my monks are disciples trained, disciplined and confident, having won peace from the yoke, who have heard much, who know dhamma by heart, who fare on in accordance with dhamma, who fare on dutifully, living according to dhamma, taking what they have learned from their own teacher, till they shall be able to proclaim, teach, show forth, establish, open up, analyse and make it plain; till they be able to refute any wrong view arising which may well be refuted by right reasoning, and shall teach dhamma that brings salvation with it.

And now, sir, the Exalted One's disciples are indeed ... able to proclaim and teach dhamma that brings salvation with it. Now, therefore, sir, let the Exalted One pass away! Let the Wellfarer pass away! Now is the time, sir, for the passing away of the Exalted One! For thus was it spoken by the Exalted One (and he repeated the Master's words, as before, adding on each occasion 'nuns,' 'lay-followers, both male and female'). Moreover this was the saying of the Exalted One: "O Evil One, I shall not pass away utterly until this Brahma-living of mine be powerful and prosperous, widespread and widely known, made popular, proclaimed

abroad by devas and mankind." And now indeed, sir, this Brahma-living of the Exalted One is powerful and prosperous... Therefore, sir, let the Exalted One pass utterly away! Let the Wellfarer pass utterly away! Now is the time for the utter passing away of the Exalted One!

At these words the Exalted One thus replied to Mara, the Evil One: 'Trouble not thyself, O Evil One! In no long time shall be the utter passing away of the Wayfarer. At the end of three months from now the Wayfarer shall pass utterly away.'

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Thereupon the Exalted One at Capala Shrine, mindful and self-possessed, rejected his life's aggregate. And when the Exalted One had rejected his life's aggregate there was a mighty earthquake, and a fearful hair-raising thunder burst from the sky. And seeing the meaning of it, at that time the Exalted One gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

That which had come to be, both gross and fine, Becoming's compound did the sage reject. With inward calm, composed, he burst asunder, Like shell of armour, the self that had become.'

S: This episode obviously belongs to the very end of the Buddha's life, three months before his actual decease. One may say that the episode has been the subject of quite a bit of discussion and even speculation as to what actually happened. But, leaving aside for the moment the question of Mara - whether Mara was a personality as it were separate from that of the Buddha or whether Mara represented a sort of train of thought arising in the Buddha's own mind, the basic fact that seems to emerge is that the Buddha could have lived longer, but that he had no will to live longer; but that, had he been requested to live longer, it would have been possible for him to do so and fulfil the natural span of his life. He had already lived eighty years; possibly, according to Vedic ideas, the full span of life was considered to be 100 years. There are some references to that in the Pali Canon; a man might live 100 years, it is sometimes said. Traditionally, as the footnote points out, kalpa, which is translated here as 'the full span of life', is sometimes taken to mean the whole of the cosmic period, but that obviously seems rather far-fetched.

: ... Ananda ...

S: Normally, Ananda was quite quick to penetrate the Buddha's meaning. You remember when the monk Sona comes from the distant place, where Ananda understands that the Buddha wants to lodge with that monk, though he does not directly say so; the Buddha merely says 'Prepare a place for him', and Ananda understands that the Buddha wants the place to be prepared in the same lodging as his own. He picks that up very quickly. But here he seems to be quite obtuse, and the text apparently attributes this to the intervention of Mara; but whether Mara is simply a personification of the obtuseness or a separate sort of entity, as it were influencing Ananda's mind, it is very difficult to say.

Subhuti: It seems quite odd - one would have thought that he would respond to the need. If this was a need, it wouldn't have to be necessarily spoken. It all seems a bit ...

S: So one would have thought, but apparently not, according to this passage. It is averred that the Buddha has to be requested to stay longer. There is the possibility, evidently, of staying longer, but perhaps it is not strictly necessary. The Buddha has done his work, but he could

stay on a few more years if he were actually asked. But there is no one [319] actually to ask him, so he does not stay on. He rejects, as it were, the remainder of that span. It is quite an odd and even mysterious episode. You might say that, obviously, after the Buddha's actual decease, there would have been quite a bit of discussion: could he not have lived longer? Why did he not live longer? Some people do live for 100 years; why did he not? Well, he wouldn't have any craving or desire to live longer, and of course his work was done; but, perhaps, if he had been asked, he might have stayed on longer. Well, who is the obvious person to ask him? Well, it was Ananda, who was always around; but perhaps, even though the Buddha did hint that he could, Ananda was not quick enough to take it up. In this way, you can imagine a tradition of this sort developing after the Buddha's decease. Also, they don't want to blame Ananda too much, so Mara is brought in: it was Mara influencing Ananda's mind. One could look at it in that way, if one is not disposed to take the episode as a faithful reflection of what actually happened. One could quite easily imagine that sort of tradition coming into existence.

But as regards the span of life, there are a few points to be made. First, every species of life has a natural span. In the case of a human being, in the present world-period, this is often taken to be 100 years. So the question arises, what are the factors which cause you not to fulfil the full term of the period of life natural to your particular species? What, for instance, are the factors that might prevent you from fulfilling the whole of your natural term?

: Probably, in most cases, lack of the will to continue living.

S: Yes, lack of the will to continue living.

: Accident.

S: Accident might cut you short, yes. Disease. Karma. And there is also another factor, which is considered quite important in the Buddhist tradition: what they call a life force or, literally, life faculty.

: ... will?

S: I am not sure. Certainly will to live is not mentioned. No, I think it is something other than will to live; it is something like the natural vitality that keeps you going.

This whole question arises in connection with the Tibetan long-life ceremony - the ceremony for the prolongation of life. What actually happens, or what are they trying to do through that ceremony?

: Mainly to keep the life faculty in you.

S: It is mainly to reinforce the life faculty, yes, and also, through accumulation of merit, to counteract any possible bad karma which might threaten your life and thus cut short your life span. But mainly it is to reinforce the life faculty. Of course, it cannot prolong your life beyond the natural span; it can't make you live, say, 200 or 300 years. Usually it is said that the overall purpose of the ceremony is to counteract bad karma which might result in the shortening of one's life; to eliminate diseases - presumably psychosomatic diseases - which might result in premature death and thus shorten one's natural life span; and to reinforce [320]

the life faculty so that it carries you to the end of the ... life span. But primarily, the purpose ... the life faculty. This is in the case of the ordinary person; but, of course, in the case of an Enlightened person, there would not be a will to live, so it is as though the Buddha had done everything necessary. Mara points this out in the episode. He had thoroughly trained all the bhikkhus, all the bhikkhunis, all the upasakas and all the upasikas. They were able to do everything. So, in a way, there was no need for the Buddha to stay around any longer. But his natural span of life, taking it to be 100 years, was not exhausted. Presumably there was no karma that would cut it off; there was no serious disease, as far as we know; he seems to have been energetic and active right up to the very end, so there was no failure of the life faculty. So it was as though the Buddha had been carrying on living, in the absence of any will to live, simply because he had work to do. When that work was finished, there was no reason why he should have stayed on any longer. But if he had been actually asked, he might have done so. That seems to be the situation.

Sona: The 100 years life span: where did that come from?

S: It was the general Indian tradition. As regards this period, it is said, according to what we regard as Hindu and Buddhist myth and legend, that the 100 year life span characterizes only this particular epoch; that there are other epochs in which the life span is 1,000 or 10,000 years and others in which it is only 10. At present it happens to be 100; that is the natural span for a human being.

Some scientists are saying this at present, I believe. The average human life is being prolonged, apparently, isn't it? Some are saying that there is no reason why most human beings should not reach the age of 100.

: Does this mean being prolonged ... ?

S: You mean mere prolongation?

: Yes, rather than ...

Sagaramati: In biblical times, they seem to have (lived several hundred years).

S: Hm. But there is the question whether the biblical year was the same as ours. In the case of these extraordinary life spans - 900 or 700 years - it is suggested that the word for year actually means lunar month. But who knows?

The suggestion also seems to be that, after the Buddha's original Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, what functioned in him in place of the ordinary will to live was simply what is generally referred to as compassion. He remained alive, active and functioning simply because there was something to be done: principally the preaching of the Dharma and the founding of the Sangha. (Pause.)

Perhaps it is appropriate that the Buddha makes this remark to Ananda under these particular circumstances in that particular place. Vesali was a town in which the Buddha had quite a large number of followers, so apparently he had gone on his alms round there, he had eaten his meal and then he had called to Ananda and said that they would go to Capala [321] shrine or caitya for the noonday rest, during the hotter part of the day; and, after they had got there

and sat down, the Buddha just commented on what a beautiful and lovely spot it was, how attractive, with its little shrines or caityas dotted here and there, presumably under groups of trees in little groves. That suggests, first of all, the Buddha's appreciation of natural beauty, but also it suggests that it is a natural situation or circumstance in which the Buddha might raise that sort of matter.

There is also the question of the four bases of psychic power, the four iddhipadas or riddhipadas. Perhaps we should go into that, also. The Buddha suggests that the prolongation of his life would be by an act of iddhi, as it were, which suggests a sort of intense determination on a very high level of consciousness or concentration. Perhaps we had better go into this a little. I take it that everybody is familiar with the four dhyanas? Are these clear in everybody's mind - the four dhyanas or jhanas, at least by way of those four similes? You remember what the four similes are?

: The four form dhyanas, do you mean?

S: Yes, the four rupa dhyanas. Do you remember the first one?

Two voices: The soap powder.

S: What does this suggest, broadly speaking? What does this simile convey?

: The saturation of one's normal state by the higher state.

S: Yes. Though a bit more precisely than that, because in the case of the water and the powder, you have two quite different things: you have water, which is obviously wet, and you have the powder, which is obviously dry; so the mixing of the water into the soap powder and the saturation of the soap powder by the water suggests the bringing together and mixing of two things which are normally quite separate and distinct, and even opposed. Therefore, the first dhyana represents more a state of integration, a sort of healing of conflict, and - yes, one could say the saturation of the whole being by a slightly higher state of consciousness, but that slightly higher state, one might say, is simply the experience of the integration, of everything coming together, of there being no conflict between the conscious and the subconscious, as it were, but being all together, all in harmony. There are no conflicting ideas, no conflicting emotions. You are not deeply absorbed, you are not ecstatic or anything like that, but you are in a state of harmony, peace, equilibrium and tranquillity. You are not disturbed. You feel as though you could just go on sitting there indefinitely. This is the first dhyana state, the stage symbolized by that simile. There is, of course, still mental activity, at least connected with the practice or the exercise which brings you into that state, but this first dhyana, the state represented by the simile of the soap powder and the water, should be attainable quite easily after a few months or even a few weeks of practice, even though only from time to time, maybe not every day, but certainly when conditions are propitious. A sort of restful, poised, balanced state in which there are no conflicting drives or pulls.

That is the first dhyana. What is the simile for the second dhyana?

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: The lake with the subterranean spring.

S: Simply, the lake with the subterranean spring, but I should have said that you are in it. What does this suggest?

ABC: That you have reached a certain level where the energies are coming up of their own ...

S: - of their own accord. You don't experience the level from which the energies are bubbling up, but you remain in this first dhyana state and then, remaining in it, you start feeling energy, or even emotion, bubbling up from some deeper level and gradually filling or influencing or permeating the level at which you already are, and even gradually transforming it. One could say that this is the level of inspiration in general. I think one can look at it quite broadly; you could even say that this is also the level of artistic creativity in its purer form. In other words, the energy, the inspiration, apparently comes from somewhere else - somewhere other than your conscious being, as it were. You may have the faith or conviction that it is from somewhere else within you, some deeper level within you; it may even actually feel like that; but it certainly is not from within the conscious personality or conscious experience or conscious being. You might even, in some circumstances, feel that it is coming definitely from outside you and even be convinced that you are being inspired by somebody else, as the poets used to say that they were inspired by the muses or by Apollo; or you might even feel that it is coming from God. But it doesn't seem to be coming from you. It is coming within you, but not from you. But usually, it actually seems as though it is from some deeper level within you, and it is gradually filling the conscious mind and conscious experience - which is not the conscious in the narrow sense, because you have already gone through that stage of psychic integration, in other words the first dhyana.

So it is a state of inspiration. I have been working out a terminology, incidentally, for the four dhyanas - in English, needless to say. The first we could describe as the stage of integration, and the second as the stage of inspiration in the broadest sense.

What about the third rupa-dhyana? What is the simile for that?

: The lotus standing clear of the water.

S: Not exactly clear, in the sense that you would say it was standing clear of the mud when it springs up from the mud, because it is also sort of sprinkled with the water. I think the text actually says 'permeated and bathed by the water'. Whether or not that is clear, certainly the water is on it. So you may say 'the lotus in the midst of the water'. What has happened here, do you think?

: Presumably there has been some kind of breakthrough to the source. The unknown source in the second dhyana, from which the energy was flowing, has now become one's abode.

S: Yes, right. It is all around you. You are as it were living in the midst of it, just like an element in which you live and move and have your being. In the second dhyana, it is just a little spring coming up within you, but in the third dhyana it is all around you. In the second [323] dhyana, it - or a tiny part of it - is in you, but in the third dhyana you are in it. It is a quite different sort of experience. It is like, for instance, when you think of something greater than you; to the extent that you only think of it, you have only an idea of it, and inasmuch as the idea is within you, it is in you. But when you start actually experiencing it, you are in it. For instance, at this moment you can think of India, but India is just an idea which is in your

mind, so India is in you. It is a quite faint experience. But if you go to India, then you are in India; India is all around you. It is a quite different sort of experience. That is the difference between the second dhyana and the third dhyana. In the second dhyana there is a sort of experience; something as it were arising within you, welling up within you. But in the third you are completely surrounded by it, so it is a completely different sort of experience. This I call the stage of permeation. So we have integration, inspiration, permeation. You are permeated by it, just as the lotus that lives in the water is permeated by the water. What about the simile for the fourth dhyana?

: A man in a white robe.

S: A man in a white robe. So what has happened here? It is the white robe that he puts on after having a bath. It is not a robe, strictly speaking, just a piece of cloth that you wrap around you; it is a dhoti. What is the significance of that? You have left the water behind, in a way. You have purified yourself by means of the water, and now you have put this white sheet, robe or cloak all around you. What is suggested here?

ABC: Beyond the touch of the outer world.

S: (You are) beyond the touch of the outer world. It is as though the water has changed into the white sheet. It has hardened and become more tangible, it has become more of a force and is insulating you from the whole of the outside world. It has become more active, as it were. It is almost as though the water, in becoming the white cloth, has taken the offensive against the world; that it begins to influence the world.

Do you see what is happening now? In the first stage, the stage of integration, you simply got yourself together. In the second stage, the stage of inspiration, you started experiencing within yourself some higher state of consciousness, welling up like a little spring. In the third stage, you are completely immersed in that. But in the fourth stage, you start taking notice of the whole of the world around you, and your water, your lake, transforms itself into a cloak, as it were. You are not only in it, but you are protected by it from everything that is foreign, everything that is of the world, and you start even affecting your surroundings. This stage I call the stage of radiation.

In other words, at this stage your own state of consciousness - because this is what we are essentially dealing with, higher and higher stages of consciousness - your purified and concentrated and inspired consciousness has become so powerful that it acts like a sort of force. It protects you from all outside influences, and it even starts affecting the world around you. It starts exerting an influence. In other words, it becomes like a sort of aura. Everybody has an aura in the ordinary sense, but the aura is usually very weak; but here, the aura has become very strong [324] and powerful, and is capable of affecting other people as well as of protecting you. It is capable of affecting other people's minds. All this is represented by that white cloak.

Do you get the general idea of some feeling of it?

: In the fourth dhyana, how much is one subjectively aware of the world? I have always thought that there would be less and less contact, in that simple sense, between one and the world - that one is less aware of the meditation room, the smell of incense, etc.; that one gets

as it were further and further in. Some of the remarks you have made make it sound as if, at this point, you turn outward again.

S: It does seem like that, yes. One does. You could also say that, even when you are in the highest dhyana state, supposing you open your eyes, what then? You don't see as you usually would see, because you are not the same sort of individual; but it is not as though you had become blind. There is perception, but it is a different kind of perception. To quote Blake again, 'A fool sees not the same tree that the wise man sees', but there is a tree there, and they both see it. But inasmuch as the consciousness is different, they see in different ways. So we must not think of the fourth dhyana as necessarily a sort of cataleptic state in which you are cut off. Yes, it may be that, for a while, you are so deeply absorbed that you are completely oblivious of what is happening outside. But that is not the highest state or stage, as it were; you return to your awareness of the world, but it is a different kind of awareness. The world itself seems transformed; (it is) not that you remain oblivious to it and in order to become aware of it again you have to sink to a lower level - not quite like that.

ABC: It is almost as if you turn yourself inside out.

S: Right, exactly! Anyway, what I am getting to here is the point that, when you get as far as the fourth dhyana, you radiate energy very powerfully. You have a strong positive aura, as it were. And, of course, we get this depicted in art: the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have auras. What does this mean? What is the aura? It isn't just something fanciful. It is their sphere of influence, quite literally, in a psychic and spiritual sense. This can operate even at a distance, as it were.

Now the point to be made here is that, according to the general Buddhist tradition, the so-called psychic powers are operated to any degree of intensity or efficacy only on the basis of a strong experience of the fourth dhyana. And now one can begin to see why this is. Your so-called psychic powers are operated through or by your very active and powerful aura - using this expression rather loosely - and it is through this that you see at a distance, hear at a distance, and even cause things to happen from a distance. So the fourth dhyana is the basis of *iddhi*, which means simply potency, power, in the widest sense. It is not necessarily magical power - *iddhi* or *riddhi*. For instance, when the monks were discussing about the two kings, Bimbisara and Pasenadi, they referred to their power and potency, their royal *iddhi*, which meant the power of the king in the broadest sense. It is exactly the same word. We are still concerned with mundane things. There is nothing transcendental here yet. This does not lead you directly to Nirvana. Even Devadatta had some of these powers, but they didn't do him very much good. We are still on the mundane level, [325] though higher within it than we usually get. When I say mundane, I mean the *lokiya* or *laukika* as distinct from the *lokuttara* or transcendental. All the heavens are *laukika*, mundane, not transcendental. So you are about a third of the way up to heaven, you could say, objectively or cosmologically speaking. Maybe not even that; maybe a quarter of the way up. So *iddhi*, the so-called psychic power, develops on the basis of the fourth dhyana; and, from a discussion of it, we can see why this should be so. If you have a very powerful - I won't say personality - a consciousness, a very intense, concentrated consciousness, which functions around you like a sort of aura and which can project itself, as it were, into the world, then things may start happening, even without your conscious knowledge or intention. But you can deliberately cultivate this. How do you do that? There are four different ways, and these are called the *riddhipadas* - the four ways, or bases, of psychic power; and the Buddha has these. It is suggested here that one who has these

four bases of psychic power well developed can, among other things, prolong his life so as to fulfil the whole of the natural term.

What are these four bases of psychic power? I mentioned them the day before yesterday, didn't I? First of all, there is canda. Canda is intense will, intense volition, a sort of concentrated volition. Then there is virya, which is great energy. And there is citta, mind or consciousness. I am not quite sure what it means in this context; I have never met any explanation of it, but obviously mind or consciousness must be present. Perhaps it suggests that one cannot develop the iddhis or psychic powers to the full extent unless one has the deliberate intention of doing so; the conscious or aware intention. They don't just happen, in this more intense way. And then, of course, there is vimamsa, which is investigation; presumably investigation as to the nature of what you actually want to do.

: How do you spell that?

S: V-i-m-a-m-s-a, as in the compound dhammavimamsa, investigation of the Dharma.

So the Buddha has four bases of psychic power. Therefore he has the ability to prolong his life, if he - well, not if he so wishes but if he can be induced to do so. But, though Ananda is given this very broad hint, Mara - so we are told - beclouds his mind and he doesn't respond; he doesn't act upon it; he doesn't ask the Buddha actually to prolong his life.

The fourth dhyana, by the way, I term the stage of radiation. It occurred to me that, if we really want to understand what the four dhyanas are all about, we could well speak of them in terms of integration, inspiration, permeation and radiation. Do you see the sequence, and how it builds up or develops? I think this would be a much more helpful way of looking at the dhyanas than the usual analytical way, and closer to actual experience.

Are there any queries on all this, as regards the dhyanas and the iddhipadas?

Subhuti: The texts talk about the Buddha ascending and descending the dhyanas and, in fact, before his Enlightenment, I think he goes up to the fourth and then comes back to neighbourhood concentration, and that is the point at which he gains Enlightenment. Can you say anything about that?

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S: It is connected with the presence, in the first dhyana, of vitakka and vicara. What are they? We had a long discussion about this, incidentally, in Helsinki. I am not going to repeat that, but I will just give a brief summary.

Vitakka and vicara represent mental activity. They are usually distinguished in this way. Vitakka is, we may say, the apprehension of a mental object, and vicara is its comprehension. The comparison which is usually given is this: vitakka is like catching hold of a pot with your left hand. You grasp the object - the mental object; you apprehend it, which is what the term apprehension literally means: to take hold of with the hand. So vitakka is the apprehension of the mental object. You think of something. And vicara is like scouring the pot all round with the right hand. This is comprehension: having thought of something, you think about that thing. These are the two main aspects of mental activity, according to this way of thinking. So, in the first dhyana, vitakka and vicara are present, at least with regard to the actual subject

of your concentration. You think, for instance: 'Here am I, fixing my attention on the breath.' 'This is breath,' you think first, 'and this is what I am doing with it. I am concentrating on it, so that I may develop a higher state of consciousness.' You have got this subtle mental activity there at the beginning. Or you may even have subtle, fleeting thoughts about various other things. They do not really disturb the concentration. You are concentrated, your energies are together, but there are these faint, fleeting, subtle little thoughts from time to time.

Now what happens is this. The content of the Buddha's Insight, or the content of his realization of the Truth, is expressed in a certain way, expressed in conceptual terms; or, if you like, expressed in the form of abstract ideas or statements. For instance, suppose you take a simple statement like 'All things are impermanent'. That statement expresses the Buddha's Insight. The original Insight had nothing to do with those words and nothing to do with those thoughts, but when the Buddha wishes to express what he has experienced, to express his Insight, he has to return, as it were, to the plane of thoughts and words. So, in this particular case, through the medium of thoughts and words, he expresses the nature of his Insight by saying, 'All things are impermanent.'

So, in the same way that you can go from the Insight to the expression of that Insight in that particular way, you can go from the expression in that particular way to the Insight itself; in other words, by reflecting upon the conceptual expression of the Insight there comes to be a basis for the development of the Insight. The Buddha goes from Insight to conceptual expression. We go from conceptual expression to Insight. Just as this is a comparison I sometimes give - a poet has an inspiration and writes a poem; first comes the inspiration, then comes the poem. You read the poem, and by reading it, if you are receptive and concentrated, you get something at least of the original thrill with which and out of which the poet composed the poem. In the same way, when you reflect upon the conceptual formulations of the Buddha's Insight, you contemplate on them, the Insight may arise within you, because there is a sort of correspondence between Insight and conceptual expression, conceptual expression and Insight. But in order to be able to reflect, there must be a measure of mental activity; hence you can only do this in the first dhyana.

However, that is not all. I shall say something more in a minute.

So you see the procedure? There is a lot of discussion about this among the Gelugpas and among the T'ien T'ai followers, and we shall be going into this quite a bit during our next ten days. Tsongkhapa was very [327] much exercised over this question. Let us go into it a little further.

Devaraja: So the Buddha's Insight has not necessarily occurred on the level of the first dhyana? - the Buddha's experience of Enlightenment?

S: No! It is not easy to say what one means by an Insight occurring on a certain dhyana level, because in a way it does not occur on any level but its own. In fact, with regard to Insight you can hardly speak of levels in that sense. But if the Buddha wants to express his Insight, he can only do it by as it were descending to a lower level, where thought in the ordinary sense - discursive mental activity - operates and where speech is possible.

Devaraja: So, from our point of view, then, though we speak in terms of, say, returning to the first dhyana, in fact the Insight that occurs cannot be considered on the level of the dhyanas?

S: No, it does not strictly belong to the dhyana level, though (it is) as it were occurring on the dhyana level in the sense of, or in association with, the dhyana level or dhyana experience. It is transcendental. But, anyway, let me get back to what I was explaining.

The normal procedure is that you go through the four dhyanas: that is to say, the stage or state of integration, then inspiration, then permeation, then radiation; and you have as strong or intense an experience of them as you can in that session. Then you come back or come down to the first dhyana, where mental activity is possible, where vitakka and vicara are present; and you then reflect upon one of the basic truths of the Buddha's teaching. You reflect either upon impermanence or upon non-selfhood or upon transitoriness or conditionality or sunyata. So you reflect upon those with, behind you, the whole force as it were of your dhyana experience.

ABC: You could get this quite well on retreat.

S: Yes. Now, the dhyana experience is called samatha, which means experience of the dhyanas. Samatha is a very common term in Buddhist literature and tradition. It literally means calming; sometimes it is translated as pacification, but it refers to the experience of the rupa dhyanas and even the arupa dhyanas as well. Samatha; sometimes 'calm'. You hear references to 'calm and insight'. 'Calm', here, means samatha, and that refers to the experience of the whole range of the dhyanas, dissociated from Insight: just experience of the dhyanas by themselves, just experience of higher states of consciousness.

Devaraja: Is that the same as samatha?

S: Samatha, yes. Samatha in Pali, samatha in Sanskrit.

So vipassana or Insight is to be developed only after the development of samatha or calm, because, unless the mind, the whole being, has been transformed or purified or refined to some extent, and intensified and strengthened, by the samatha experience, there is no real push behind the vipassana; no real push, as it were, behind the mental activity which should give rise to Insight or vipassana, or vidarshana. So, if without samatha experience you start thinking about impermanence and so on, this is likely to be a mere intellectual inquiry or understanding. But if, [328] having gone through the dhyanas to the best of your ability, even if it is only through, say, the second dhyana, you then return to the first and then start contemplating these conceptual formulations, contemplating, for instance, 'All is impermanent' or 'All is dukkha', then you do that with a certain amount of force and energy behind you, and then the Insight is more likely to arise; but at first it will be very weak and faint, hardly distinguishable from intellectual understanding and certainly not strong enough to start breaking through the fetters. Therefore, for quite a long time, your spiritual practice consists in alternating experience or practice of samatha with practice of vipassana, the samatha strengthening the vipassana, the vipassana also strengthening the samatha.

So you see the procedure now? If, of course, you are very deeply experienced in the dhyanas, you can be normally in a second dhyana state even when moving about, and all your mental activity becomes a sort of vipassana; you don't have intellectual activity in the ordinary sense. As soon as you start using your mind, Insight arises - certainly when you use it with regard to the Dharma, the Buddha's teaching.

Devaraja: So, could we possibly consider vipassana as a bit like Perfect Vision, or that aspect of samatha...

S: Perfect Vision is identical with vipassana.

Devaraja: And Perfect Emotion with samatha?

S: Just a minute; don't go too quickly. Perfect Vision is vipassana when it has reached a sufficient degree of strength to start breaking through the fetters. Therefore, you can say - there is not a very exact correspondence, but you can say - that the samyaksamkalpa, the Perfect Emotion, represents the beginnings, at least, of that purification of your emotional side and the development of positive emotions which is one aspect of the dhyana experience or samatha experience.

Sagaramati: Doesn't Perfect Emotion become a permanent thing?

S: Eventually, yes. Though, of course, you can always lose all your samatha experience completely at any time if vipassana is not being developed. In other words, you can have a very extensive experience of samatha - be a really great yogi; even develop psychic powers - but if you do not take up development of vipassana and if some fetters are not broken, you can lose it all completely and go back to exactly where you were before. This is what happened to Devadatta. Therefore, it is very strongly insisted on in Buddhism that these dhyana states and the psychic powers are all mundane, and that you can go up them and come down them, you can gain them and lose them, and you can slip right back. It is only the gains which come about through vipassana, when fetters start being broken, that are permanent.

: Could you repeat what you said about the connection between vipassana and Perfect Vision?

S: Yes: Perfect Vision represents the vipassana when it has reached a sufficient degree of intensity and strength to be able to start breaking the fetters - when, in other words, it has a definite effect on one's overall being and it starts permanently modifying that being in the direction [329] of Enlightenment. It starts permanently deconditioning you. Whereas the samatha experience, however exalted, is only a positive change in the conditioning itself. You merely gild the fetters! So the samatha experience just gives you a chance to develop the vipassana with real energy behind it.

There are different traditions among the schools as to how much samatha should balance how much vipassana, how much vipassana (should balance) how much samatha, whether you can have vipassana without samatha, and so on. But there is fairly general agreement - certainly this seems to be the position of the Buddha's own teaching - that you must saturate your consciousness and being in the dhyanas before taking up the kind of mental activities which will result in the development of Insight or vipassana. There are some modern schools which say you can develop Insight or vipassana without going through the dhyanas; this is the so-called vipassana school or vipassana technique. But they have had to modify that because actually you can't; it just becomes dry intellectual understanding.

Subhuti: Presumably once you've developed vipassana, your consciousness is always in a dhyanic state?

S: Not exactly, but you will at least not fall below a certain level; because certainly in the case of vipassana which is fairly well developed, the gross or crude form of the unskilful thought will not arise. But there will still be some subtle ones. But, therefore, you will not fall below a certain level of consciousness; you will not develop those unskilful thoughts which, if given expression, would lead you to lower states of existence. Those will not arise any more.

Subhuti: But in the texts it does talk about the Buddha at parinirvana going through the dhyanas, which seems to imply that he starts from a state of consciousness which is lower than the dhyanas.

S: Mm. I think we have to be very careful about taking this literally. When the Buddha withdraws his attention from the external world, then the dhyanas occur as it were spontaneously in an intensified form. But that is not to suggest that the Buddha, in his ordinary waking state, is not in the highly skilled type of consciousness which is represented by the dhyanas.

It is also said, for instance, that the Buddha doesn't sleep in the ordinary way. In the same way, even during the so-called waking state, a Buddha's waking consciousness is not the same as ordinary people's.

The main differentiating factor seems to be the presence of the vitaka-vicara. If the Buddha wanted to function in the world, he would have to think - though some schools denied that, according to the Katha-vatthu, but according to most schools the Buddha would have to think. So that suggests first dhyana. But as soon as he didn't have to think, as it were, and stopped thinking, he would be in the next dhyana. But surely the sukha and priti and so on of the higher dhyanas were always present, and the upeksha was always present.

Subhuti: So it is really just not possible to apply the same categories to the Enlightened.

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S: In the same way, mm. It is a bit like what I was saying the other day about neurotic and non-neurotic thinking. Supposing you don't have to think, supposing the objective situation doesn't require you to think, in what state of mind are you? You're not thinking. So to that extent you are in the second dhyana. We don't normally go into second dhyana when there's nothing objective to think about, because there's a lot of neurotic thinking going on, but in the Buddha's case, if he didn't have to think about anything in particular - say, he didn't have to decide where to go or what to say or who to meet - there wouldn't be any mental activity unless he chose deliberately to reflect on the Dharma. So, as soon as the objective necessity of thought disappeared, thought would disappear for him, and he'd be at once in second dhyana. So there'd be this permanent possibility of second dhyana for him in that way. You could say, therefore, that he was always in second dhyana, or you could say that he went into it when he didn't have anything to think about.

Therefore, the balanced practice of Buddhist meditation, according to all the major traditions, is a balancing of the samatha and the vipassana, an alternating of them until each becomes stronger and stronger and, according to the Mahayana, until they ultimately coalesce and you practise both together. There are various techniques for doing this in the Tibetan tradition. But you have to start off separately. Also it must be pointed out that if you study very mindfully and concentratedly and calmly, and if you have some experience of meditation,

your study can be like a second dhyana experience and can give rise to Insight. But it is very important, until Insight is developed, to keep on reinforcing Insight with dhyana experience, and then the Insight, as it becomes stronger, will start cutting the roots of the unskilful mental states, and as the unskilful mental states are weakened the positive mental states will be able to manifest more powerfully, and that, of course, will reinforce the dhyana experience. This is the usual procedure.

What about the methods or techniques? It is sometimes said that methods or techniques of concentration can be divided into two groups, depending upon whether they are techniques or methods which conduce to samatha experience or to vipassana experience. This is a Theravada classification. So, if you take your five basic methods of concentration, you find that they fall into these two different categories. Mindfulness and metta are regarded as samatha-type practices, and the other three as vipassana-type practices. I must say I don't myself altogether agree with this. At best it's very rough and ready.

: In an earlier episode, where we had the leper suddenly giving rise to an Insight experience, does that suggest that when he was listening to the Buddha he was being taken through the dhyanic states?

S: In a way, certainly, as I pointed out at the time, through the positive nidanas. Faith arose in him, satisfaction and delight, and he was very happy to hear the Buddha, so he was virtually in a second dhyana state. I think it is quite important to stress that these higher - or slightly higher - states of consciousness can arise in situations other than that of actually sitting and meditating. You can definitely have Insight arising in dependence upon a second-dhyana-type experience while reading or studying or while listening to a talk or engaging in a discussion or conversation; this is certainly possible. I think it is very important to emphasize this, or at least to point it out. This is why the Buddha asks the [331] monks to engage in dhammakatha - talk about the Dharma - because Insight can arise in that situation. But it is more likely to arise if there is a background of strong and steady samatha-type experience.

: There are all those Zen stories about monks going about their everyday life - doing some work, perhaps - and Insight arises.

S: Yes, against a background of regular sittings in the dhyana hall. This is why we start off with the mindfulness of breathing and the metta. These are samatha-type practices, in the sense that they will lead to samatha-type experience. But I personally believe that certainly the metta, when it is practised to quite an extreme, can merge into a vipassana-type experience. You as it were reflect that you have the equal metta towards all, and this can quite easily become an intuition of the fact that all are in a sense the same, and therefore distinctions are not to be made between them.

Sona: Perhaps one could even say that the mindfulness of breathing can also lead to vipassana ...

ABC: In the metta, although you might get experience of that Insight, and you come again to do the metta, would you start off in the same way and go through the different stages again?

S: Yes; it would depend what you wanted to do. You could decide to use the metta as a starting point for the development of the Insight, and when you felt you couldn't get any

further with the Insight (because) it needed even more energy behind it, then you come back to the metta proper and go through the different stages again, either in that session or later on.

ABC: So you'd go back?

S: Yes. So the basic practice is alternation between samatha and vipassana. Though we speak in terms of coming down to the second dhyana, you mustn't take it too literally. You don't altogether leave behind your dhyana experience. That is still present with you, but more in the form of energy, which is then put into the development of the Insight.

: (It's perhaps a) very broad perspective, ... dhyana ... just a sort of bringing in of ... and directing ...

S: Yes, you could say that. It's concentrated rather than expansive. Sometimes it is said that the dhyana experience makes the mind flexible, pliant and workable, malleable, so that it can then investigate Reality in such a way as to develop vipassana. Usually, it is said, our mind or intelligence is very stiff and unworkable, but the dhyana experience renders it flexible, pliable, workable. There are a lot of these expressions in the Pali.

So the dhyana experience, the samatha practice, is a sort of softening up operation. And some experience of the arts, if it is genuine, has something of the same effect, inasmuch as that quality of inspiration is present which is a dhyana-like experience.

One might say that, in the Hinayana tradition, broadly speaking, [332] Insight is cultivated mainly by way of reflecting on the three characteristics of all conditioned existence: that is to say that all conditioned existence is impermanent, unsatisfactory and void of selfhood. This is the usual Hinayana way of developing Insight: it is insight into these three characteristics of the conditioned. But in the Mahayana, Insight is developed usually, or more often, by way of contemplation of sunyata. This, of course, is one reason why, after a meditation session or in the course of a meditation session, you often chant the Heart Sutra. Why is that? - you are contemplating upon sunyata; that is what the Heart Sutra is all about. So if you contemplate on it, or even just recite it after a session of meditation and presumably of dhyana experience, you are more likely to give rise to Insight in connection with your contemplation of the meaning of the Heart Sutra. This is where the sunyata comes in, as far as the Mahayana is concerned.

: But in the Hinayana, those three characteristics in a way are a basis for this.

S: Yes, the Hinayana is a basis for the Mahayana. The Mahayana always recognizes (that).

ABC: What was the third Hinayana - ?

S: - characteristic of conditioned existence? Unsatisfactoriness, dukkha.

ABC: No, you put ...

S: First of all, transitoriness or impermanence, then unsatisfactoriness, and then lacking in selfhood, devoid of selfhood. Sometimes dukkha is enumerated first and impermanence second.

One should not, therefore, take up the development of vipassana until one has had some experience at least of samatha. I suspect we are going to have to go into this quite thoroughly in the course of our second ten days.

Subhuti: Does that not also mean that one shouldn't study - to any great extent, anyway - till a certain amount of dhyanic experience has been built up?

S: From a traditional point of view, yes, though of course it would differ from person to person. Some people can keep their intellectual understanding in reserve, as it were, not allowing it to interfere with their spiritual life and practice, and feed it in as necessary when the time is ripe, but others may be just misled and confused, so they had best be kept away from miscellaneous study. Therefore I sometimes say that, for many beginners, it is better to read the classics of Western fiction rather than yet more books about Buddhism.

Putting it very generally, one can say that one is more likely to see the truth of things when one is in a balanced and happy and zestful mental-emotional state than when one is otherwise. That is all it really means - though raised, as it were, to its highest power (in a mathematical sense). Buddhism does not believe that you are more likely to be able to see into the truth when you are tormented and agitated and anxious and conscience-stricken and all the rest of it. When you are calm, happy, [333] concentrated, peaceful, joyful, balanced, integrated, feeling inspired, uplifted, you are much more likely to see the truth then. You are much more likely to be able to see things without subjective bias or distortion.

Any other point from that whole episode? I believe it's the first time that bhikkhunis have been mentioned, isn't it?

: No, there was one ...

S: There was one reference; what was that? Was it the same sort of reference? They haven't actually appeared in person yet, have they?

Colin: When the Buddha went off on his own into the forest.

S: Ah, that's right, yes. So that also seems to have been a very late episode. But no bhikkhuni appears in person. They seem to have played a quite minor part in the Sangha during the Buddha's lifetime, though there were some of them about.

Let's look briefly at what the Buddha had previously said to Mara that he would not pass away until - until what?

"till my monks are disciples trained, disciplined and confident, having won peace from the yoke, who have heard much, who know dhamma by heart, who fare on in accordance with dhamma, who fare on dutifully, living according to dhamma, taking what they have learned from their own teacher, till they shall be able to proclaim, teach, show forth, establish, open up, analyse and make it plain; till they be able to refute any wrong view arising which may well be refuted by right reasoning, and shall teach dhamma that brings salvation with it."

I suspect the word for 'salvation' is mokha or vimutti, which we might translate as 'freedom'. You notice this last item: 'till they be able to refute any wrong view arising which may well

be refuted by right reasoning.' What does that suggest?

: Be able to see a micchaditthi when it crops up.

S: Not only see it when it crops up, but refute it. This comes at the end, suggesting it is almost a culmination of their accomplishments. That also suggests how important it is to be able to refute a micchaditthi, and how difficult micchaditthis are to refute. Because the Buddha says, 'any wrong view arising which may well be refuted by right reasoning' as if to say that some micchaditthis can't be refuted in that way and you just have to let them alone.

: It seems his work isn't done till - you know, if people can't refute them all, spot them, then they'll just spread like a disease.

S: Right. The Dharma will gradually be undermined.

I sometimes say that it probably isn't a coincidence that the Pali Canon, the Tipitaka, opens with the Sutta-pitaka; the Sutta-pitaka opens with the Digha Nikaya; and the Digha Nikaya opens with the Brahmajala-sutta. And the Brahmajala-sutta is the great net of views which the Buddha drags up, as it were, out of the ocean of misunderstanding - all the 64 [334] wrong views - and brings them to land and exposes them for what they really are. People holding some of these views are called 'eel wrigglers' because they just twist and turn, evade the issue; they slither and slide hither and thither, and flop and flurry, and twist and turn.

But that is very interesting. At least the compilers thought it necessary and important to put that discourse first. Obviously, it wasn't the first discourse actually preached or delivered by the Buddha. Maybe he didn't even deliver a discourse in that particular form. They may even have anthologised his different refutations of micchaditthis at different times; it is difficult for us now to know. But certainly the compilers of the Tipitaka thought the whole subject of refutation of micchaditthis was of sufficient importance for them to put that sutta - whether a later compilation or not - in the very forefront of the Tipitaka, as if to say, 'Let's clear all these wrong views out of the way first, then we can get on with the Dhamma.' And obviously, to expose micchaditthis for what they are requires not only some understanding of the Dharma and a measure of practice of one's own, but also a fair degree of intelligence, mental alertness, acuteness and penetration. It is not everybody who can expose and refute a micchaditthi, one might say. Therefore it may well be one of the latest of the disciples' accomplishments.

Devaraja: It implies a considerable degree of confidence and - and, er ...

S: Yes. Though, of course, not merely confidence, otherwise you might be refuting as a micchaditthi something which was a sammaditthi with full confidence! Sometimes that happens. You need confidence, surely, though confidence by itself is not enough.

Any other point arising from this episode? Oh, we haven't looked at the verse, the udana.

'That which had come to be, both gross and fine, Becoming's compound did the sage reject. With inward calm, composed, he burst asunder, Like shell of armour, the self that had become.'

'Becoming's compound' refers, of course, to the whole psycho-physical personality - one

might say the empirical personality, the continuance of which, or the possibility of the continuance of which, the Buddha rejects. And the verse suggests that there was no attachment on the Buddha's part to the continuance of that psycho-physical personality. What about that earthquake? What do you think of that?

'Whereupon the Exalted One at Capala Shrine, mindful and self-possessed, rejected his life's aggregate. And when the Exalted One had rejected his life's aggregate there was a mighty earthquake, and a fearful hair-raising thunder burst from the sky.'

This is the first time that this sort of thing has happened, I think, in the Udana. So what do you think of that? Do you think there actually was an earthquake, or that it has a symbolical significance, or what?

Devaraja: It seems that what the Buddha's doing is, he's been so kind of against the conditioned order of things that it's almost like it tears a rent in the fabric of ... [335] Udana VI. i

S: The earth gets a great shock, yes. That underlines the importance of the occasion, and also in a way the unnaturalness of what the Buddha did.

: Like rending the veil of the temple.

S: Right, yes. According to later tradition, there are earthquakes not exactly earth quakings, they are earth shakings - the earth is described in some passages as shaking in six different ways, from side to side, and up and down, and so on. It is not just an earthquake in the ordinary sense but a sort of sixfold shaking; and this sixfold shaking occurs, for instance, when the Buddha is Enlightened, when he passes finally away, and on this occasion. It is as though the whole mundane order is given a terrible shock. There is a tremendous repercussion on the whole of conditioned existence.

Sagaramati: What would be meant by 'his life's aggregate'? That was his five skandhas, was it?

S: Yes, presumably he rejected the possibility of an extension of life as it were for his five-skandha aggregate; that is to say, the extension to the full limit of the normal span of human life. I assume that is what it means. Or you could say 'rejected the total aggregate of the normal span of life', rejected the whole period, i.e. rejected the completion of the whole period, or rejected what was remaining.

Time is nearly up, so I think we won't go on to episode ii, which is again a rather lengthy and important one. We'll leave that for the evening. Is there any further comment on this episode? You see we are approaching the end of the Buddha's life; we are being warned, as it were, that the Buddha's life is nearly over. So it seems much as though this Udana is a sort of little gospel. It isn't exactly a biography, but you do get a sense of chronological sequence, though the episodes are not arranged in strict chronological sequence. You go back and then you go forward again sometimes. But you do get an impression of progression, of the original Enlightenment, the proclamation of the Ideal, and then more detailed teaching about qualities to be developed, qualities to be abandoned, and you see the followers gradually coming in, people becoming disciples, the movement growing and spreading, then encountering

jealousy, opposition, and so on. You get quite a vivid picture of this, and even the teaching itself developing, becoming more complete, more systematic. You get an impression also of the organization, the Sangha, developing. So it is quite a vivid picture.

Then, of course, you rather get the impression that Savatthi is at the centre of things. The Buddha spends a lot of his time there. Many of the episodes take place in the neighbourhood of Savatthi, though quite a few other places are also mentioned.

: Going back to the earthquake; just thinking about that again. I'm trying to picture it, almost. It seems as if it invites a comparison between this natural force, the earthquake and the thunderstorm, and the Buddha himself. I can see the Buddha almost not as a person but as a natural force.

S: You can also say that (there are) the earth and the sky, the two opposites [336] as it were, and there's the Buddha in between. There's heaven, earth and man, as the Chinese tradition would say.

What about Mara? We haven't really said anything about him. The Pali tradition mentions four Maras or four senses of the term Mara. The ancient Buddhists were, by the way, quite aware that Mara could be looked at metaphorically; they were completely aware of that, but they didn't therefore reject the possibility of there being a personal Mara too. So Mara was explained in four ways. There is what is called Kilesa Mara, kilesa meaning defilement: Mara in the sense of the defilements or unskilful mental states. Here Mara is simply a metaphorical expression for unskilful mental states; Kilesa Mara. Then there is Maccu Mara, Mara as death. Early on there was a reference to Mara the Lord of Death, wasn't there? That is this aspect. The fact of death is Mara. This Mara is also equated with Kamadeva, the god of lust, or Cupid as we would say, the god of love, because it's craving, trsna, which leads to death and rebirth and death again - they are the two sides of the same coin. The god of love is also the god of death. So the arrows of Mara are the arrows of Cupid, the arrows of Cupid are the arrows of Mara. So this is Maccu Mara, Mara as death, or desire as death. Or even Mara as the will to live, one could say.

Then there is Khandha Mara, conditioned existence itself as Mara. Khandha, the skandhas, that is, which make up the whole of conditioned existence, physical and mental.

: Just conditioned existence?

S: Yes, Mara as conditioned existence, or Mara in the sense of conditioned existence in general. And then Devaputta Mara. Deva, meaning god, putta, meaning son; Mara the son of a god, that is Mara as one who has been reborn in one of the lower heavens, a powerful being, slightly asura-like, who is somewhat of a tempter, but has a distinct personality within conditioned existence.

Devaraja: It's almost like Satan or something.

S: Yes, right. In the Christian tradition there is this phrase, 'the world, the flesh and the devil', so that the world is more like Khandha Mara, the flesh is like Kilesa Mara, maybe Maccu Mara too, and the devil, of course, is Devaputta Mara. It's something like that. But Buddhism does not rule out the possibility of there being an actual as it were evil entity around - not

someone evil from the beginning, but someone who is at least rather mischievous and malign, though someone also who can change and who can even gain Enlightenment, eventually.

Sometimes Maras are referred to in the plural, and several Maras are known by name. There is Dussi Mara, who appears in several suttas - dussi meaning wicked. So Maras are also a class of evil beings. They are not very dangerous; they are mischievous rather than dangerous. They are not particularly friendly to the Dharma or the spiritual life, but they don't have any cosmic significance as in Christianity, they are quite minor figures. At best they make a bit of a nuisance of themselves, disturb the monks' meditation and things like that, or they inspire you with naughty thoughts, but they can't really do very much more than that.

We talked about this on a previous study occasion, I think - that it would sometimes be perhaps quite useful just to think in terms of Mara [337] rather than in terms of psychoanalysis. If you get an unskilful thought 'Ah, yes, it's just Mara, let me be careful; Mara is trying to disturb my mind, trying to disturb my meditation. All right, I won't give way to him. I won't let him win.' Rather than go delving into it psychoanalytically, just think, 'Well, that's Mara, obviously!'

: I think even in some psychological circles, something rather like that occurs if one has a recurrent negative character, negative personality. You can give him or her a name, and it helps to get away from that person.

S: Yes. Though, of course, you must be careful not ultimately to disown that, because it is you, or a part of you, an aspect of you, a product of you, and you eventually have to reclaim it and reincorporate it. But in the meanwhile it is a quite useful practical tactic to regard it as some other personality that really doesn't have very much to do with you.

Sometimes, of course, one does get the impression of people being as it were possessed by some kind of negative entity, quite definitely, which takes them over. The general Buddhist view is that if you habitually cultivate unskilful thoughts, especially unskilful thoughts of a certain type, then you may lay yourself open to a sort of possession and Mara may actually take up lodging within you, because you then provide him with a convenient and even happy abode, from his point of view - you are in such a negative state. So this is a danger in allowing yourself to get very, very negative, either through fear or craving or hatred - these seem to be the three main points - and you can be completely taken over as though by some outside entity, and that is very difficult to deal with. You have to be helped, then, by others; you can't do much about it your self. So therefore one shouldn't allow oneself to accumulate unskilful mental states or thoughts to the extent that you can be as it were taken over by something outside.

: Do you think that corresponds in any way to - in psychological terms - being taken over by one of the archetypes?

S: Perhaps: inflation. But it is a very negative thing, what I'm talking about. But yes, it is a species of inflation, though by something negative, even evil. And positive possession or positive inflation is still inflation, as when you become over-confident.

Any other question? You notice Mara seems very solicitous, but that's all just bluff. Mara seems almost concerned about the wellbeing of the Sangha and the future of the Buddha's

movement. He is talking to the Buddha almost like another Buddha, but it's Mara, actually - as of course the Buddha knows perfectly well.

Devaraja: Would this be Khandha Mara?

S: Well, what do you think? It seems to me much more likely to be Devaputta Mara.

Sona: I was wondering what sort of unskilful mental states ... (Voices assenting.)

ABC: Could you say a bit more about this Devaputta Mara?

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S: Well, Buddhist cosmology does teach that there are different planes of existence, higher than the human as well as lower, and these are inhabited by beings, in the case of the higher ones, loosely termed gods or devas; and some of these devas are very highly developed - far more highly developed than human beings, though still within the Wheel of Life. Others are more developed than human beings as regards power, maybe intelligence, and length of life, but are not morally any better; may even be a bit wicked or a bit mischievous. And Mara belongs to that category.

ABC: I would have thought to get up to deva levels you would have to have a lot of positive merit anyway.

S: But then you can lose that, it can become exhausted and you start declining.

Sona: So if you have been there for a few thousand kalpas ...

S: I must say I have not met with any explanation in the Scriptures as to how a Devaputta becomes a Mara. It could be that they were largely on the asura plane, though this is not actually stated.

Subhuti: It's perhaps related to the question that it's possible to develop psychic powers without any positive ...

S: Right - spiritual development, yes.

Subhuti: But presumably that's on the basis of the fourth dhyana, which is a positive state. How can that be reconciled?

S: Because selfhood is still there. It has merely become somewhat softened, but it can harden again. Also, as is made clear in the case of Devadatta, if your basic motivation is not spiritual, sooner or later you may find it very difficult to keep up the dhyanas anyway and you will eventually lose your psychic powers. Probably Buddhism would say that if your original motivation was evil you never would be able to develop them. In most cases, therefore, probably your original motivation is quite good and quite positive but you get led astray later on. If there had not been a measure of positive motivation you would never have got through the dhyanas, never got any glimpse of psychic power.

Subhuti: Certainly that implies integration ... there isn't anything but positive ...

S: Right. But once you start misusing or misapplying them, you destroy their very basis, and you lose them. Therefore there is no such figure in Buddhism as the powerful evil magician who remains like that indefinitely. There is no such figure as that in Buddhism at all.

Subhuti: What about Milarepa's first experience?

S: I am not sure about that. Yes, concentrated evil thought, concentrated hatred, can no doubt work harm on others. But this seems to be rather different from a dhyana state - it's almost something diabolical, a sort of negative counterpart, almost. You're concentrated unskilfully for

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: So he was an evil magician before he started practising meditation?

S: Yes. I'm not sure, though, just how literally we can take the account of Milarepa's feats of black magic. I'm not sure about that at all. Perhaps there was the will or the wish to kill, which was just as bad from a karmic point of view, but whether that resulted actually in the deaths of so many people it is difficult to say; or (I wonder) whether he didn't maybe take their lives by other means. I must say I am personally very sceptical indeed about the power of so-called black magic, and this is the Buddhist view, really: that the lower you get in the scale of mental states, the less powerful they become.

Subhuti: It seems to be mostly other people's suggestibility that gives the powers.

S: Yes, right.

Sagaramati: You couldn't say that about somebody like Hitler, because the Germans at the time were ready ... It was just a matter of ...

S: Yes, right. No doubt when he gave his speeches there was intense mental energy on a low level, but also intense susceptibility on the part of his audience - susceptibility to the extent of hysteria - you know, people swooned when they shook hands with him. And politicians who met him just found a rather mild little man, rather fond of animals, and they couldn't understand how he produced that sort of effect on people.

: He was a vegetarian as well!

S: Yes. But we don't usually mention that! (Laughter.)

If someone has a very powerful negative attitude towards you, I think you can feel that, even if you're not particularly suggestible. It can even give you sometimes a mild headache, but not anything more than that. I doubt very much whether it could kill you, or even make you seriously ill.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, in East Park, at the storeyed house of Migara's mother. Now on that occasion the Exalted One at eventide, having risen from his solitude, was sitting outside the porch (of the house). Then came the Rajah Pasenadi, the Kosalan, to visit the Exalted One, and on coming to him he saluted the Exalted One and sat down at one side. On that occasion also there passed by not

far from the Exalted One seven long-haired ascetics, seven Niganthas, seven naked ascetics, seven of those who wore one cloth only and seven Wanderers with long nails and hairy armpits carrying a bundle on a shoulder-pole.

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Now when the Kosalan, the Rajah Pasenadi, saw these sevens, he rose from his seat and, putting his robe over one shoulder and dropping his right knee to the ground, raised his joined palms towards those sevens and thrice pronounced his own name, thus: 'Sirs, I am the Rajah Pasenadi, the Kosalan!'

Then, not long after the passing of those seven long-haired ascetics, Niganthas, naked ascetics, one-cloth-ers and seven Wanderers, the Rajah Pasenadi, the Kosalan, came back to the Exalted One ... and said this: 'Sir, is any one of these to be reckoned among those who in the world are arahants or who have reached the arahant path?'

'This thing, maharajah, is hard to be known by you, a householder, living the life of the passions, living a life encumbered with wife and child, enjoying the use of Benares sandalwood, decking yourself with garlands and unguents, handling gold and silver, - it is hard for you to say, "these are arahants or these have reached the arahant path." It is by dealing with a man, maharajah, that his virtue is to be known, and that too after a long time; not by one who gives it a passing thought or no thought at all; by a wise man, not by a fool. It is by association, maharajah, that a man's integrity is to be known ... it is in times of trouble, maharajah, that his fortitude is to be known ... it is by conversing with him, maharajah, that a man's wisdom is to be known, and that too after a long time, not by one who gives it a passing thought or no thought at all; by a wise man, not by a fool.'

'It is wonderful, sir! It is marvellous, sir, how well said is this by the Exalted One, - "This thing, maharajah, is hard to be known by you ... by a wise man, not by a fool." These people, sir, are informers of mine. They range about and investigate a district and come to me. What they previously investigate I subsequently shall give judgement on. But now, sir, when they have washed off their dust and dirt, when they are well bathed and anointed and have shaved their beards, arrayed in white cloths, supplied with and possessed of the five sense pleasures, they will enjoy themselves.'

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

One should spread his efforts everywhere; One should not be the man of someone else; Not in dependence on another should one live, Nor go about to make a trade of dhamma.'

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S: There are quite a few points to be made here. One can see the scene very easily. Once again, it is Savatthi, and again it is 'the storeyed house of Migara's mother,' that is to say, Visaka, the house donated by her to the Buddha and the Sangha. So the Buddha, towards the evening time, having spent the afternoon by himself, is sitting just outside the porch of the house, and from what follows later we can understand that there is a sort of high road not very far away, in fact quite near. And the Buddha is sitting outside the porch, maybe coming down a few steps probably there was a raised veranda round the building - and it means he is sitting quite near to the high road, where people are passing up and down. And the king of Kosala,

Pasenadi, comes to see the Buddha and they are sitting there together. And as they sit there together, there come along the road a whole company of ascetics and wanderers of all kinds, a whole crowd of them.

First of all, seven long-haired ascetics. You see these even today. They wear their hair very long. They never cut it, they braid it, and sometimes they artificially lengthen their braids - they can be even twenty, twenty-five feet long - and they coil them round their heads like this, and they are very matted and dusty and sometimes they rub ashes on themselves. Then seven Niganthas. Niganthas literally means those free from bonds, and it is a term to describe the Jainas, as we call them now, the followers of Mahavira. Then seven naked ascetics, and seven who wore only one cloth, and seven who didn't cut their hair at all or trim their nails, so that they had long nails and hairy armpits - civilized or well-to-do Indians usually shave the hair under the armpits; it is considered rather disgusting to let it grow, so they shave it when they shave their beards - and carrying a bundle on a shoulder pole. So you have got this very motley crowd of ascetics and wanderers of all kinds, coming along the road in the evening time with their bundles on their shoulders and so on, as the Buddha and Pasenadi are sitting there, not very far from the road outside the porch of the storeyed house.

King Pasenadi is quite an old man. He is supposed to be exactly the same age as the Buddha, as far as I recollect, and he is a very pious man. He is a follower of the Buddha, and he supports religious people generally. So as this crowd of holy men is passing by, he just rises from his seat and very politely salutes them in the way that lay people, even in a very prominent position, do salute ascetics and holy men even nowadays in India. And he announces his own name. This is also customary. It isn't so stilted in the Pali as it is here. You just say, 'I'm So-and-so,' and you salute. So he is just paying respects to these holy men, these ascetics, as they come by.

After they have all gone, he turns to the Buddha and puts a question which, as we afterwards come to understand, is quite a loaded question. He asks: 'Amongst all these ascetics, are there any, do you think, who are actually Enlightened?' This is, in effect, the question that he is putting. 'Are there any arahants, any worthy ones, any spiritually really developed people, among them?' The question is loaded, because he knows who and what they really are, as we see later on. Perhaps he is just wondering whether the Buddha can really see through it all, whether the Buddha really does know, or whether he could be taken in by appearances. So he asks, 'According to you, are there any among these ascetics and wanderers who could be regarded as having reached any higher spiritual attainment?'

The Buddha does not reply directly. After all, he is the Buddha; [342] it is not so easy to catch him out. So first of all, the Buddha says, "'This thing, maharajah, is hard to be known by you, a householder, living the life of the passions, living a life encumbered with wife and child, enjoying the use of Benares sandalwood, decking yourself with garlands and unguents, handling gold and silver, - it is hard for you to say, "these are arahants or these have reached the arahant path."'

In other words, he is taking the opportunity of slightly or gently rebuking the average religious-minded lay person's eager desire to know 'Is this one Enlightened, or is that one Enlightened?' You often get this among lay people, in India and even elsewhere, with regard to different teachers and so on. They always want to know, 'Is he Enlightened or is he not Enlightened?' and they often ask the question in a way that suggests there is a definite answer

which they are capable of understanding. So the Buddha is slightly putting down this attitude, and saying, 'How can someone like you really know? What is the use even of asking? You are just not in a position to know. Even supposing I said yes, you would just have to take it on absolute faith and trust, as it were. That wouldn't help you really to know.' So he is discouraging this attitude of wanting to know who is Enlightened and who is not. One can say that one comes across this sort of attitude in really rather strange forms, when people come up to you - I have had this experience once or twice in the last few years - and they assure you that, say, Guru Maharaj is the Perfect Master and really Enlightened, and they absolutely know it, as it were, but they may not even have met him. They have only read the literature and the hand-outs, but they want to insist on this and want to force it upon you too. And this is absolute presumption, as it were; how can they possibly know? So this is the sort of thing that the Buddha is getting at.

Then he goes on to say:

"It is by dealing with a man, maharajah, that his virtue is to be known, and that too after a long time; not by one who gives it a passing thought or no thought at all; by a wise man, not by a fool. It is by association, maharajah, that a man's integrity is to be known... it is in times of trouble, maharajah, that a man's fortitude is to be known... it is by conversing with him, maharajah, that a man's wisdom is to be known, and that too after a long time, not by one who gives it a passing thought or no thought at all; by a wise man, not by a fool."

So the Buddha is saying, as it were, '(Not) to speak of knowing who is and is not an arhant, it is really difficult to know truly anybody, any other human being, any other man. It isn't such an easy matter as you think to really and truly know them. You have to deal with him for a long time. You have to think about it and you have to be wise yourself, not a fool. It is only by association that you know whether a man is a man of integrity. It is only when you have seen a man in trouble that you know whether he is a man of fortitude. It is only by talking with a man much that you can know whether he is a man of wisdom, and only by thinking about it a long time, not just giving it a passing thought - and even then only if you yourself are wise - only then can you know what another person [343] is really like. So here are you, all eager to know whether any of these people is an arhant. That is not such an easy thing to know for anybody. Even to know what an ordinary man is really like is not easy. So don't expect a quick answer to this sort of question.

Then, of course, Pasenadi is very impressed.

"It is wonderful, sir! It is marvellous, sir, how well said is this by the Exalted One... These people, sir, are informers of mine."

Even in those days the government informers, the CID as it were, used to go round disguised as sadhus, picking up information and then reporting back to the king.

"They range about and investigate a district and come to me. What they previously investigate I subsequently shall give judgement on."

According to the commentary, Pasenadi explains to the Buddha that he saluted them so as to help them keep up the imposture, because he says, 'If I don't play my part and treat them as sadhus when they are disguised as sadhus, they may keep back some information from me, so

I play my part too. I pretend I don't know. I pretend I think that they are sadhus and salute them accordingly.'

So, supposing the Buddha had said to the maharajah, 'Well, yes, maharajah, very likely some of them are arhants' - then the king would not have had much faith in the Buddha. But the Buddha is not to be so easily caught, and maybe he does see through the whole thing. He sees that they are not really sadhus. He can see into their mental states. He can see the way that they carry themselves. Maybe even from the way the king saluted them and the way they responded, he could see something fishy in the whole thing. In any case, for the ordinary person, even the ordinary wise person, it is not easy to penetrate another person's character. Here is the maharajah asking him for a snap judgement; so he is just pointing out a few things and, in a sense, very gently and in a friendly way, taking the maharajah down a peg or two and teaching him a few things.

But people are very ready to judge. This is the general principle that emerges. One should be very reluctant to judge anybody or come to a general conclusion, a general value judgement about somebody as a total person. You can even say, 'Such-and-such action wasn't particularly good,' or 'Such-and-such action was very good,' but one has to be very careful about proceeding from that, even when you know what the action really was like, to a general judgement about the person as a whole. You need to know that person for a long time, know them under many different conditions, in many different situations, talk to them quite a lot, sound them out; and then you need to be a rather wise and intelligent person yourself before you can form any real estimate about them, especially about their degree of spiritual development. So for people to go around handing out as it were certificates to this person and that - 'Oh, he's very spiritually advanced,' or 'She's a woman of great spiritual understanding,' or 'Oh, yes, he's Enlightened'; this is really presumptuous and foolish and doesn't do anything for the people that you are supposed to be giving the certificate to. One should be very cautious about speaking about other people's degree or level of development in a general way.

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Any query on all this? It is quite an important point.

It also means, quite clearly, that those who are not living a spiritual life are not fit judges of those who are leading or only trying to lead a spiritual life. For instance, people who are not leading a spiritual life at all, not even making any attempt, are sometimes very critical, and they say things like, 'Oh, I thought you were a Buddhist! Why are you doing such-and-such?' or 'Oh, I thought you were supposed to be a Christian; why do you do such-and-such?' They are just not in a position to know or to judge. They don't know what it's like to be in that situation - to be making an effort, with all that that involves, with all the repercussions that that sets up in different parts of one's being. They just don't know, but they are very quick to judge. But here the Buddha says, 'Unless you yourself are really on the spiritual path, you just don't know what it's like and you are not in a position to judge.'

: Yes, that's a very important point.

S: If someone doesn't do the sort of thing that you expect him to do or would like him to do for you, you say, 'Oh, I thought you were supposed to be a Bodhisattva! I thought you were supposed to be a Buddhist!' But you don't know what he's going through, you don't know at all how it looks from his point of view, from his side. But worldly people are very quick to

make these sort of judgements on people who at least are trying to lead a spiritual life. If someone who is trying to lead a spiritual life maybe just happens once or twice to lose his temper, those who have never made any attempt to be mindful or to keep their anger under control say, 'Oh, I thought you were supposed to be a Buddhist. I thought Buddhists were not supposed to lose their temper,' and make remarks of that sort. You know that only too well; you don't need to be told it. But you get told it in this sort of way, by someone who is not making the slightest effort to lead a spiritual life or to bring unskilful mental states under control. It is very presumptuous of such people to talk in this way.

You can also see what a rich variety of ascetic types there was in the Buddha's day, and even now in India you can see, I think, all these types and more.

: Niganthas, presumably, is the term that they apply to themselves, is it?

S: Yes. Mahavira, in the Pali Canon, is usually termed Nigantha Nat... (short break in recording)

: Did Mahavira and the Buddha ever come into contact with each other?

S: No. Mahavira was somewhat older than the Buddha, as far as we know possibly about twelve years older, I think - and died before him. Yes, that reminds me: there is a quite interesting sutta, I think in the Digha Nikaya, where the bhikkhus bring the report of the passing away of Mahavira to the Buddha and relate how the disciples are quarrelling - I think; I don't remember the exact details - and his teaching is falling into confusion. Therefore, I think, they suggest that they and the Buddha rehearse together his teaching under its various headings - lists of lists [345] - so that, after his death, the same sort of thing does not happen to his disciples and his teachings. And thereupon there is a great recital of the main numerical headings of the teaching - the one of this and the two of that and the three of something else, and so on, which is quite interesting. Actually, it did so happen that the Jain canon was largely lost, so very little of Jain literature survives. The ancient literature seems to have entirely perished. I say literature, though, of course, it was originally an oral tradition. And only some works compiled quite late do survive, and these are only accepted by some Jains, the Svetambas; the Digambas do not accept them - that is the naked followers. There are not many of those left. There are thought to be only about 12 or 14 naked Jain ascetics in India today, but there are quite a few hundred of the white-robed ones. And the Digambas maintain that all the scriptures have been lost. Digamba means 'sky-robed' - robed in the sky. Svetamba means 'white-robed'. A naked Jain ascetic did appear in the streets of Delhi some years ago, and attracted quite a big following; and there was a feature on him, with photographs, in the illustrated Weekly of India. I don't know what happened afterwards, but he was quite prominent for a time. I have myself seen some naked ascetics in the streets of Benares. I don't think they were Jains, but they were certainly naked ascetics.

Devaraja: Is that what the Itivuttaka is - the recital under various numbers?

S: I don't know. One would have to check the actual lists of the Itivuttaka against the lists of that particular sutta. It think it is the Sangiti-paryaya Sutta.

Subhuti: It also lays down the conditions under which the Order and the Dharma were to be preserved.

S: You have been doing this, have you?

Subhuti: Well, looking at it.

S: Good. I was thinking some time ago that sooner or later we ought to go through the Digha Nikaya and Majjhima Nikaya, and possibly the other Nikayas, too. I did in fact start looking through the Digha Nikaya with this in view, but a lot of the material is not really very suited to this kind of study. One would have to select, possibly; or just discuss what was discussable, or discussion-worthy, as it were.

There are long lists of games in which the monks must not indulge, and at this length of time some of the terms are so obscure that we don't really know which games are referred to. There are lots of footnotes giving different people's opinions as to what game it actually was. We don't want to go into this sort of thing too deeply or too thoroughly - just take it that the monks were discouraged from indulging in games.

Anyway, any further query on all this?

: Should Upasakas be discouraged from (playing games)?

S: It depends what sort of games you have in mind. The games which are listed there are games like hopscotch (laughter), and a sort of primitive cricket, and games with dice, and tracing letters in the air with your [346] finger and then the other fellow has to guess what letter you drew (helpless laughter) - some of them are quite childish. I take it you have nobler games in mind, more athletic games? (Voice: Yes.) This is connected with the whole question of exercise in the spiritual life. Do you want to say anything about that? (Pause.) I mean, what is behind the question? There is a question, presumably, lurking behind the question. You are not thinking about football and cricket and things like that, are you?

: Um - yes. A Buddhist XI - ?

S: Yes! As I said, it is part of this whole question of exercise, physical exercise. And presumably if you do yoga with that in mind, you can do other things with that in mind. It is a question of proportion, and of your own physical constitution. Some people do need a certain amount of exercise, an active life. So one just has to see. But, obviously, you can hardly be a professional footballer and a full-time Buddhist. And certainly not into it in a highly competitive sense. But I think a certain amount of physical exercise, especially for the young and robust and healthy, is probably a necessity. But obviously it mustn't become an end in itself. If you find that you keep more fresh and lively and healthy by taking certain exercise, do so by all means. It can be press-ups, or it can be a little bit of mindful football, or something of that sort. Weight-lifting. Judo, karate. Sorry, sailing - I forgot to mention that!

Devaraja: I don't know if I heard this correctly, but it is reported - perhaps misreported - that you once, not very seriously, considered the possibility of Order Members playing cricket occasionally. Is that right?

S: Not seriously, no. There might have been a passing aside, of a slightly jocular nature; but certainly no serious statement on the subject, no. I don't think cricket gives you enough exercise, anyway. I think it's a dull, boring game! I don't think I have ever watched a game of

cricket in my life. My father tried to get me to watch when I was quite small - about five, I think - but I firmly refused. I wanted nothing to do with it! I walked away and read my book.

Sona: Perhaps you are not in a position to comment, then!

S: I am in a position to comment inasmuch as I find it a dull, boring game.

Sona: You mean you have never watched a whole game?

S: No, I don't think so - not for more than about ten minutes at the most, you know, with great difficulty. You seem to see people standing around and nothing much happening!

But certainly, if you feel in need of some exercise, take it, by all means, in whatsoever form.

What about the verse here? We haven't turned to the udana.

'One should spread his efforts everywhere; One should not be the man of someone else; Not in dependence on another should one live, Nor go about to make a trade of dhamma.'

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This udana seems to have some connection with the episode. But what does the Buddha mean by 'One should spread his efforts everywhere'? That seems a little bit obscure, doesn't it? Ah, the Commentary explains sabbattha, everywhere, as sabbasmin papakamme: 'spread your effort', as it were, 'over all unskilful mental states and activities.' You shouldn't let any of them get away. Your effort should penetrate to the furthest reaches of your unskilfulness; penetrate every little unskilful nook and corner of your mind, as it were. So:

'One should spread his efforts everywhere.'

Not a single unskilful thought should be allowed to escape.

'One should not be the man of someone else; Not in dependence on another should one live',

as those pseudo-ascetics were, the men of the king and living in dependence upon the king. This is reminiscent of an earlier verse in which it was said that 'painful is all subjection, blissful is all control'.

Maybe I should say a few words about the general conception of aisvarya, as it is called in Sanskrit, which literally means rulership; but it doesn't so much suggest rulership over others as that you are yourself autonomous, that you are not dependent on anybody or anything else. Isvara, of course, is the standard Sanskrit term for God, because he is autonomous and independent in a way that human beings are not. And so for some reason or other, in Indian thought, you come across this conception of aisvarya again and again. Aisvarya is something very positive and important. It is not independence quite in the Western sense, but it is more like a sort of positive autonomy. It is the state of being a ruler, though without necessarily having anybody to rule over; but there is nobody ruling over you. This is called aisvarya. It is pointed out that the standard Hindu conception of atman involves aisvarya; the atman is autonomous, self-governing. Whereas Buddhism points out, on the other hand, that the atman as experienced by us, our empirical self, is not independent or autonomous in that way. It is

dependent and contingent. For instance, you get the argument in the Pali Canon that you cannot as it were say to yourself, 'Let me be so-and-so or let me be such-and-such'. This shows that you have no aisvarya. You have got no rulership, you are not autonomous. Otherwise you could be in whatever state you wished to be. When you wished to be happy, you could be happy, but you can't. So what does this show? That you have no aisvarya. This means that you are not a self of the Upanishadic metaphysical-type. There is no such self, in fact, according to Buddhism - so far as you are concerned, at least. Yours is a contingent self. This is one of the arguments used by the Buddha and the early Buddhists against the Upanishadic concept of self: that that concept involves, as part of its definition, this concept of aisvarya or rulership or lordship; but that is not characteristic of our empirical self, which is therefore anatma, in that sense of the term atma.

Subhuti: Presumably this is connected with moksa, mokha - the concept of freedom.

S: Yes. I don't know whether the two are ever explicitly linked, but obviously they are of the same order.

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ABC: So this concept of aisvarya is only a Vedic thing?

S: Yes. In Buddhist terms - though Buddhism doesn't quite say this - the aisvarya is purely ethical and spiritual; an ethical and spiritual aisvarya is possible. But that is something to be achieved, something to be developed; not something that naturally belongs to you.

'Not in dependence on another should one live, Nor go about to make a trade of dhamma.'

The Buddha, in a way, did not really approve of what Pasenadi was doing, perhaps. He suggests here that it isn't right to make use of the appearance of asceticism, and the respect enjoyed by ascetics in society, for unworthy purposes. Because these people, these pseudo-ascetics, are really using the ascetic life, or the pretence of the ascetic life, as a means of livelihood. That is their living, working for the king in this way. So of that the Buddha can hardly approve.

You get this, of course, in India even today; you get quite a few people working for the CID in the guise of ascetics, or ascetics working as informers for the CID. It is very difficult to tell which is which, sometimes - whether they are regular CID men disguising themselves as ascetics or ascetics who are just regularly supplying information to the CID. Because ascetics move about freely and meet lots of people, so they are quite useful sources of information. One of them appears in my Memoirs, by the way, whom I met in South India.

: Did you have any trouble with him?

S: Not so far as I know. They just go round picking up information, you know, just in case; general nosey-parkering; and they report back. But of course, the expression 'making a trade of dhamma' - this has much broader implications than this particular instance.

: It's using Dharma for worldly ends.

S: Yes, as a sort of secular profession. But this has happened, of course, in all religions to

some extent, even in Buddhism itself, though probably less in Buddhism than in any other tradition. You certainly found it in Christianity, in the case of the Christian clergy during the Middle Ages. Religion then really did become a trade, on a grand scale, and that's how the Reformation came about. I mentioned the other day that we often don't realize how terrible the situation was, and how awful the corruption was. There was traffic in absolutely everything that the church had to offer. You could get absolution from any sin on payment of a sum of money; exemption from any obligation. For instance, a bishop wasn't allowed to buy his appointment to a certain see, the revenues of which were often very extensive, and if he did try to buy or succeed in buying, it was the sin of simony. But most bishops did buy their see, but they could get absolution from committing the sin of simony by paying a certain sum of money to the pope or to the appropriate committee of the Vatican. So this was what was going on all the time. For instance, according to the laws of the church, you could not hold more than one benefice at a time. Holding more than one benefice at a time was called pluralism. That was not permitted. But you could buy exemption. For instance, Cardinal [349] Wolsey, in England, was a famous example. He held three out of the four wealthiest benefices in the whole English church. He was Archbishop of York. He couldn't get Canterbury because the Archbishop of Canterbury just wouldn't die; he lived on to about 95 or something like that. But he was Archbishop of York, Abbot of St. Albans, and I think Bishop of Winchester, which were three out of the four wealthiest benefices, the fourth being Canterbury itself. He had all of them together with sundry other priories and abbasies and incumbencies, and he was only supposed to have one; but he bought exemption from the pope. And everybody else was doing the same sort of thing - collecting benefices, and being permitted to break the ecclesiastical law, on payment of a certain sum of money by way of compensation. So the whole church became a sort of system of laying down rules and laws and then allowing people to purchase exemption. So the rich benefited - so did the church - but the poor didn't. This was what was happening all over Europe, right up until the time of Martin Luther. It had been going on for two or three hundred years, and getting worse and worse. So this really was an instance - possibly the worst the world has ever seen - of making a trade of religion on a grand scale. We often forget this, and how bad it was.

The culmination, of course, was the hawking of indulgences. An indulgence meant that you could purchase exemption from the temporal and spiritual penalties of a sin by buying an indulgence in advance. This traffic was actually going on. And with the proceeds from this traffic, among other things, the popes, especially Leo X, built St. Peter's in Rome. This is why, quite recently, just two or three years ago, a group of six or seven hundred Franciscan friars, I believe in France, sent a petition to the pope that he should pull down St. Peter's as a sign of repentance on the part of the Vatican for the way in which it was built - or the way in which the funds out of which it was built were collected. Of course, the pope didn't even consider it, apparently. It is very significant that 600 or 700 Franciscans should have sent this sort of petition to the pope, even if only as a gesture - that he should pull down St. Peter's. They described it as a monument to pride. I thought this was quite good. It showed that there is some sensitivity to these sort of things, even within the church.

Any query on all that?

Several important points emerge from this episode: one, that those not leading a spiritual life should not try to estimate, or judge, those who are trying to lead a spiritual life. And, two, that it is very difficult to know another man, what he really is like. And, three, that one shouldn't make a trade of the Dharma.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated contemplating his own various unprofitable conditions which he had discarded, and the various profitable conditions which he had brought to fullness by cultivation of them.

Thereupon the Exalted One, seeing the meaning of it, at that time gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

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At first it was, then was not; 'twas not at first, then was; 'twas not, 'twill not become, nor doth it now appear.'

S: This seems to refer to the Fourfold Right Effort.

'At first it was, then was not.'

At first there was an unskilful thought, but then it was removed.

'twas not at first, then was.'

At first, certain skilful thoughts were not present, but then they were brought into existence. And so on.

It seems, if you read the udana strictly, as though only three of the four possibilities are covered. But apparently there are variant readings, as we see in the footnote. The general sense is quite clear. The Buddha is reviewing his own past development and seeing how he removed unskilful mental states and developed skilful mental states to the full, presumably by way of the Fourfold Right Effort.

ABC: What was the meaning of the last line, then - 'twas not, 'twill not become... '?

S: 'Twas not' - that is presumably the unarisen (un)skilful thought. The unarisen unskilful thought 'was not', neither would it come into existence in the future. This is the prevention of the arising of the unarisen unskilful thought. And there should be a fourth item, the maintenance in existence of the arisen skilful thought; but that isn't mentioned here.

ABC: I thought that would have been covered in the first line, that first 'It was' - unskilful states were, then they were not - S: Yes, there seems to be a bit of overlapping with one of the four possibilities missing. No, the first says, 'At first it was, then it was not'. And then, underneath that, 'twas not, 'twill not become'. Those are two distinct possibilities. The first refers to the suppression of an unskilful thought that has arisen, and the second to the prevention of an unskilful thought that has not arisen. The second part of the first line refers to the bringing into existence of a skilful thought that previously was not in existence. Though the fourth possibility - the maintenance in existence of a skilful thought already in existence - that does not appear to be mentioned here. But the general pattern is clear. It is the Buddha reviewing his own previous experience, looking back, as it were, and seeing how unskilful states were discarded and skilful states developed to the full.

Sagaramati: I suppose it is good to remember that the Buddha did develop, rather than thinking that he suddenly appeared, as it were.

S: Yes, right. Any query on that? (Silence.) All right, on to iv, then, which is quite lengthy and important, and contains a very famous parable.

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'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion a great number of recluses and brahmins, who were Wanderers holding various views, entered Savatthi to quest for alms-food. They held various views, were tolerant of various things, favoured various things, inclined to rely on various views. Some recluses and brahmins spoke in favour of this, and held this view; - that the world is eternal, that this is the truth, that any other view is infatuation. Other recluses and brahmins... that the world is not eternal; that this is truth, any other view infatuation. Some ... that the world is limited ... others that it is unlimited... Some held that the living principle is body ... others that the living principle is one thing, body another. Some held that the self is beyond death, others that the self is not beyond death ... that it both is and is not beyond death ... that it neither is nor is not beyond death . that this is truth, that any other view is infatuation. So they, by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious, lived wounding one another with the weapons of the tongue, maintaining: 'Dhamma is such and such, dhamma is not such and such; it is, it is not.'

Now a great number of monks, robing themselves in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi to quest for alms, and, after their rounds and eating their meal, went to the Exalted One ... and said: 'Sir, there are living here in Savatthi a great number of recluses and brahmins who are Wanderers holding various views to the following effect (and they detailed the various views). Then said the Exalted One:

'Monks, the Wanderers holding other views are blind, unseeing. They know not the profitable, they know not the unprofitable. They know not dhamma, they know not what is not dhamma. In their ignorance of these things they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious (in maintaining their several views thus and thus). Formerly, monks, there was a certain rajah of this same Savatthi. Then, monks, that rajah called to a certain man, saying, "Come thou, good fellow, go and gather together in one place all the men in Savatthi who were born blind."

"Very good, sire," replied that man, and in obedience to the rajah gathered together all the men born blind in Savatthi, and having done so went to the rajah and said, "Sire, all the men born blind in Savatthi are assembled."

"Then, my good man, show the blind men an elephant."

"Very good, sire," said the man, and did as he was [352] told, and said to them, "O blind, such as this is an elephant"; and to one man he presented the head of the elephant, to another its ear, to another a tusk, to another the trunk, the foot, back, tail and tuft of the tail, saying to each one that that was the elephant.

Now, monks, that man, having thus presented the elephant to the blind men, came to the rajah and said, "Sire, the elephant has been presented to the blind men. Do what is your will."

Thereupon, monks, that rajah went up to the blind men and said to each, "Well, blind man, have you seen the elephant?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then tell me, blind men, what sort of thing is an elephant."

Thereupon those who had been presented with the head answered, "Sire, an elephant is like a pot." And those who had observed an ear only replied, "An elephant is like a winnowing-basket." Those who had been presented with a tusk said it was a ploughshare. Those who knew only the trunk said it was a plough; they said the body was a granary; the foot, a pillar; the back, a mortar; the tail, a pestle; the tuft of the tail, just a besom.

Then they began to quarrel, shouting, "Yes, it is!" "No, it is not!" "An elephant is not that!" "Yes, it's like that!" and so on, till they came to fisticuffs over the matter.

Then, monks, that rajah was delighted with the scene.

Just so are these Wanderers holding other views, blind, unseeing, knowing not the profitable, knowing not the unprofitable. They know not dhamma. They know not what is not dhamma. In their ignorance of these things they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious, each maintaining it is thus and thus.'

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim Of brahmin and recluse the honoured name!
For, quarrelling, each to his view they cling. Such folk see only one side of a thing.'

S: So what do you think the main point is here in this episode and in this parable?

ABC: That the truth is very difficult to express in just one view.

S: Yes.

Devaraja: Perhaps it is more that they have got hold of something - one particular experience - which if properly understood is an indication of what the truth is, but they misinterpret it.

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S: They mistake the part for the whole; they are unable to see the whole because they are blind. They are in contact with the elephant to some extent, and they describe it according to their actual experience of it. But the experience is limited because they are blind. It is only the man with Perfect Vision who sees the elephant - sees the Truth - as it really is, in all its parts, in all its aspects, completely and totally. It is not so much that the blind men are wrong as that they are only partly right.

So in a sense you could say everybody is right - in a way. This is perhaps why Blake says that everything possible to be believed is an image of the truth. You can't ever be totally wrong. There is always some truth in what you say, because it is based on some experience, however limited, however partial, however one-sided, however much in need of qualification.

Also, it suggests that you don't arrive at the truth merely by adding together the various partial views. Because, supposing without knowing what an elephant was or without ever having seen an elephant, you merely said, 'All these views are partly right. Yes, the elephant is like a ploughshare, it is like a winnowing basket, it is like a granary, it is like a pillar. It is like all these together' - that wouldn't really give you an idea of what an elephant was like at all. This is the syncretistic approach, on a purely intellectual level. This is intellectual syncretism: (but) to see the whole, and to see how all the partial views are partly right, you need a totally different sort of vision, on a totally different level. You need eyes. This is very, very important. So the truth cannot be represented by the sum total of partial views. The truth is a sort of Gestalt, we might say, it is a whole complete in itself. And when you see the whole, when you see the truth, then you can understand how the partial visions represent parts of the truth, aspects of the truth. But merely by adding together all the partial visions, without a total vision of your own, you just do not see the truth, you have no idea of it. You just have something monstrous, a jumble. So this is very important.

So you don't therefore, arrive at the truth by trying to put together what different people have said about the truth at different times and in different places, and try to get all the pieces of the jigsaw to fit. There is no jigsaw in that sense. You need a total vision which is one vision, an integral vision. And that is what samyakdrsti is - or at least samyakdrsti is the beginnings of that. So you don't arrive at the truth, the total vision, by getting as many blind men as possible, yourself included, to tell you what they see - or perceive, rather. You arrive at a vision or knowledge of the total truth just by opening your eyes and becoming Enlightened.

Some people do try to arrive at the truth about something by adding one bit to another bit, but that is not the way. You have to see the thing totally, even if not at first very clearly, and get a total picture, a total view. And then gradually get to know that in greater and greater detail, or more and more thoroughly, more and more clearly.

Devaraja: I personally (feel) this quite strongly. You remember I said at the last couple of Order days, when you were there, that I thought there was a danger of misinterpreting partial experiences, and that that was what I felt the value of the scriptures was, and the various teachings: you know, if one had an experience, then to always bear that in mind.

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S: Here, of course, it is not so much a misinterpreting of partial experiences, but of trying to put all the partial experiences together to add up to the total Experience, or the total Truth.

Devaraja: But, in that they interpret the tusk as a ploughshare, they have a partial experience of the elephant, but they misinterpret that partial experience.

S: That's right, yes. Well, the tusk is like a ploughshare, but the elephant is not like a ploughshare. They are wrong in saying that the elephant is like a ploughshare. They don't know what the elephant is like. They only know - or this particular blind man only knows - the tusk, but he doesn't know that it is only part of the elephant; he thinks it is the whole

elephant. This is what happens with people of limited mystical experience. They have a certain experience, but then they start thinking that is the whole experience, they know the whole truth.

Devaraja: And they interpret it on the lines of their own previous condition.

S: Right, yes. You can overcome this only by being connected with a total tradition in which all the aspects of the Truth are - if one can speak in that way - understood and taken into consideration, and where any one-sidedness on one's own part can be checked and corrected.

I couldn't help thinking that the vision or sight of the man with eyes is a little bit like what Blake says about the fourfold vision - not the vision of only one part of you, not just single vision, as he calls it, the vision of a very one-sided and degenerate reason or intellect, but the vision of the whole man, the fourfold man, that is to say the vision which takes into consideration not only reason but emotion and imagination, and even instinct, perhaps one could say, as well. So the fourfold vision is all of these, as it were, blending together, and seeing totally.

Devaraja: When you say instinct, would intuition ...

S (interrupting): Well, I am just mentioning that because it is in Blake. I don't want to insist upon it particularly from a Buddhist point of view. There is just the general idea of the total Truth being apprehensible only by the total individual. You can't apprehend the total Truth with just one of your faculties. Just as one blind man - or, for the matter of that, any number of blind men - can't apprehend the total truth of the elephant, or the total truth which is the elephant.

In other words, it is not enough to put together any number of partial visions. You have to have a total vision which is more than the sum total of partial visions. The total vision is undivided - indivisible, even. And so long as you are a divided and fragmented being, you will never see it.

This is probably one of the most important parables in the whole Pali Canon. You notice the way in which the Buddha tells the parable:

'Formerly, monks, there was a certain rajah of this same Savatthi.'

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It begins almost like a Jataka story, so you suspect that some of the stories told by the Buddha in this way have been taken too literally, as regards their actual locale, as it were. It is more like saying 'Once upon a time.' It suggests that it is a sort of fairy tale, it is not to be taken literally. But perhaps sometimes the Buddha's as it were fairy tales with a meaning, his parables, were taken literally, and he was only really saying 'Once upon a time'. I don't think he intends to say that in some former age, at some former period of history, there was in fact a rajah of Savatthi who actually conducted this sort of experiment. I think it is the Buddha's way of saying 'Once upon a time'. And I think this applies to many of those episodes or incidents where he is represented as saying, 'On a certain occasion, O monks, there lived in this town, many, many thousands of years ago, a certain rajah, or Buddha,' and so on. It is more like 'Once upon a time.' I won't say in all instances, but certainly in some.

What about the different views? There seems to have been quite a variety of views held by different wanderers.

'They held various views, were tolerant of various things, favoured various things, inclined to rely on various views. Some recluses and brahmins spoke in favour of this, and held this view; - that the world is eternal, that this is the truth, that any other view is infatuation. Other recluses and brahmins ...that the world is not eternal; that this is the truth, any other view infatuation.'

And so on. The Buddha's attitude, of course, as regards these particular pairs of views, was that it was not necessary to commit oneself to either alternative or to any alternative in order to be able to lead the holy life and realize Nirvana; that the possibility of leading the spiritual life did not depend upon the recognition of the truth or untruth of any of these opposing views. One took one's stand simply on the fact that there was suffering, and that this suffering could be transcended.

Some of these views, especially those that we shall encounter in the subsequent episodes, are barely intelligible to us today. We can hardly imagine people holding them, they seem so odd and so bizarre. Some, of course, we can; for instance, that the world is limited or unlimited. What does this mean? This is quite a good example, because it is something we do think and talk about even today.

: The universe, is it?

S: Yes, the universe as a whole - whether it is limited in space or unlimited. Some people might say that the universe is limited in space. It contains so many thousands of millions of worlds or galactic systems, but it is a certain distance, as it were, across, and beyond that there is nothing, void, there is no world, no universe. The universe has a limit in space. Others would say 'No, it just goes on and on, it is infinite.' These two views can still be held by different people nowadays. This is, of course, one of Kant's antinomies, you may remember.

: So is the other one, about the Italian ...

S: Yes, right. But this is a quite simple and clear example.

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: What is an antinomy?

S: An antinomy is a sort of contradiction, but not just a contradiction; you can't say that the universe is finite, you can't say that it is infinite. These are two contradictory propositions. But an antinomy arises when you can find equally good reasons and equally bad reasons on both sides, so that the issue can't be determined finally. There are conclusive arguments against both positions, but there is no third position, apparently. This was resolved by Kant - this is one of his great contributions. He pointed out that the difficulty arises, the antinomies arise, when you consider - in this case - space as something objective, as objectively existing, rather than as a form of the understanding, as part of the way in which we apprehend things. Kant points out that the antinomy arises in this way, and this is generally accepted by philosophers since Kant. It is in this sense that Kant's philosophy is called critical philosophy

and all pre-Kantian philosophy is called pre-critical - that is to say, Kant takes into consideration the way in which we actually apprehend existence. He criticizes, that is to say, the form of our knowledge. He doesn't take it for granted. This is, of course, a very crude summary of a quite complicated subject, very much oversimplified. But to the extent that one regards space as something objectively existing, space as a sort of box out there in which things are - you know, whether those things may be tables and chairs or whether they may be universes and galactic systems - to the extent that you regard space as a sort of objective, existing-out-there container of things, to that extent the question will arise as to whether it is finite or infinite, and to that extent you will get an antinomy. So obviously the question cannot be settled one way or the other on those terms, so those wanderers go on disputing and wrangling indefinitely.

The Buddha pointed out that it was not necessary to make a stand either way, or to take up either position, in order to be able to lead the spiritual life. Therefore, one could discard and disregard those opposing views. It was not necessary for one as his follower, or as a follower of the spiritual path, a practiser of the Dharma, to adopt either of those views - any of those views, in fact. You could just disregard them, put them aside, they were irrelevant. All that you were concerned with was the fact that suffering existed, that your present state of being was not satisfactory and that you could do something about it. That was all you were concerned with. Therefore, he refused to answer any questions as to whether the world was finite or infinite in space, whether it was eternal or non-eternal, whether the life faculty was the same as the physical body or not the same as the physical body. He said these questions did not need to be answered in order to make it possible for one to lead the spiritual life. The spiritual life could be led independently of the truth or untruth of these propositions. It is a quite remarkable attitude, in a way.

Subhuti: Presumably, also, leading the spiritual life would lead you to a point at which you understood the basis for those questions?

S: Right, yes! This comes out quite clearly in some of the suttas in the Digha Nikaya, that is to say the subjectivity of space, as we would call it; where the Buddha says quite clearly: 'Within this body is the arising and passing away of the world, or the universe' - in other words, in one's own mind.

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Subhuti: And even that is capable of being misunderstood.

S: In a way, yes. Well, anything is capable of being misunderstood if you really want to! But some things are more easy to misunderstand than others. Or some statements, you can say, cannot but be misunderstood, whereas with some others there is at least a possibility of understanding, if you are an intelligent and honest person.

Many questions, or rather pseudo-questions, arise out of what we may describe as naive realism, whether with regard to thoughts or terminology.

: Can you expand on that a bit?

S: Well, I did the other day when I was talking about actuality and potentiality - that there is Buddhahood in you, as it were. You know. This is an example. Lots of beginners' questions

are of this kind. That is why they are so difficult to deal with. Have you ever noticed this? (Voices: Yes.) Beginners' questions are usually based on a sort of naive realism or naive literalism. That is why they are so difficult to handle.

Devaraja: I've got a guy - he doesn't do it so much now, but he was always asking a lot of stuff about atoms and the brain cells and - You know, I just found it really difficult to find a way of cutting through that.

S: Well, you should say, 'Why aren't you on a science course? This has nothing to do with Buddhism. We just don't deal with that. That is not our field.' That is a short and simple answer. Buddhism doesn't have any view. It leaves all that sort of thing to science. But he probably wouldn't let you get away with it as easily as that.

Devaraja: No, he wouldn't!

S: You just have to be skilful, skilfully pass the buck.

Devaraja: Fortunately, he was tape-recording it, and afterwards he admitted that, when he listened to the tape recording, 'There was this guy who kept asking these stupid questions!' (Laughter.)

S: So the Buddha is really saying here that for you to get started on the spiritual path it is not necessary for you to have arrived at a solution of purely theoretical questions which, by their very nature, are antinomial in any case and therefore incapable of an answer on their own terms. So, if you are trying to get an answer to these questions before you even start on the spiritual path, you will never get started. And this is, of course, the purport of another famous parable, the parable of the man wounded by the poisoned arrow. I take it everybody knows that one? (Voices assenting.)

Again, I think it would be a good idea to get all these parables together in one volume, as it were. It did occur to me also - it just occurs to me to ask or wonder what people think - Gotami did collect together some of these, but I subsequently wondered whether it wouldn't be a good idea not just to collect together the translations of these [358] parables but to get someone to re-write and retell the parables; because sometimes they are told in a quite stereotyped sort of way, having been orally transmitted, and sometimes the force is lost to some extent. So I was thinking maybe it would be a good idea if someone just retold them, rewrote them. What do you think of this?

Voices: Mm!

ABC: Or invented new ones.

S: Well, that would be a later stage, perhaps. You would have some difficulty in inventing parables as good as these, wouldn't you, unless you were really gifted? A parable is a very difficult sort of thing to write, or to think up or invent. Perhaps this should be done, then to sort of rewrite the parables.

: As distinct from retranslating them.

S: Yes. I don't mean just brushing up a translation and making it a bit better, but rewriting it. Not elaborating it. The essence of a parable is it is really short and to the point, with no elaboration, no trimmings. But, for instance, in the case of the Pali parables, cutting out repetitions. One does not, for instance, need to enumerate all the different views.

: Good idea.

S: In a good literary style, but pithy and to the point. I did suggest originally, when I first mooted this project, that there could be different sections in the volume (with), say, first of all, parables from the Pali Canon; parables from the Suttas, that is, like this one and like the parable of the man wounded by the poisoned arrow. And then a selection of parables from the White Lotus Sutra. There are some very good ones there. And then not only parables in the strict sense but stories; say, some short Jataka stories. Then stories about monks, stories about nuns. Then Zen stories and Tantric stories. So, in this way, I thought there could be quite a nice little collection - or a big fat collection, perhaps - but most of them rewritten, not merely translated, from these different sources.

Devaraja: (It would be) a great inspiration.

S: I think it would be very inspirational and almost anybody could read it. Children could read it. And sometimes you don't feel like the rather dry conceptual type of material. The stories are much more inspiring and interesting, when the old brain is a bit weary, after it's been ploughing and plodding through the Abhidharma and you've found it all rather tiring, you can refresh yourself with a dip into these parables and stories. The sources can always be indicated in a little appendix at the back, and those who want to go to the original sources and get the exact translations can do so.

: In a case like this, would you cut the story off from the context (and not) include the first bit about the views?

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S: Yes, I think I would be inclined to do that. Just have the parable; the parable speaks for itself. It is universal in meaning. 'Once upon a time'. You could even begin like that. There is a nice little literary project for someone.

: There is a great demand for that sort of thing, particularly in schools and so on.

S: Yes, indeed. But it needs a bit of literary skill and a bit of imagination - not to depart substantially from the parable as it has come down to us, but certainly to bring out its nature as a parable more fully and clearly and strongly. The parable is an extremely good way of conveying truth. And Buddhist literature is full of really beautiful and meaningful parables. The parable of the raft; the parable of the ever-smouldering anthill; the parable of the ancient city and the ancient road. There are so many. In the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, the White Lotus Sutra, the parable of the burning house. That parable, and the other parables of the White Lotus Sutra, could well do with retelling. They are over-elaborated in the text, you know, in the typical Indian style. There is far too much detail, you are swamped with detail. Those parables need quite severe trimming, and would then become much more effective.

Devaraja: What parables has Gotami done?

S: Mainly - I think only - from the Pali. I don't know whether she intends to continue with the project; I think probably not, because she is involved with transcribing tapes and other things. It might be a good idea - this is only just in passing - to have in Mitrata (I shall have to mention this to Padmaraja) each month one parable so retold. In this way you could get different people working on them, and in that way you could build up a collection. That would give the poor Mitras a bit of fun, you know, don't give them always this analytical stuff, good as it may be; give them something readable and enjoyable!

Devaraja: You have also retold some stories particularly well in lectures.

S: These could be retold.

Devaraja: The one with the arrow, I know, is very well told in one lecture; and then there is the story of the chess game. That is very well told.

S: Yes. I think the Japanese original is very good and could be used without alteration. Some do not need to be altered, but some definitely do. And there are various stories I have told in lectures which are not exactly parables; they are more like anecdotes. Well, some of those could be rewritten or retold - edited - and included. Like the story of the guru and the kitten. Everybody knows that one, surely?

: I can't remember that one.

S: The guru and the kitten? Hey. Maybe I'd better tell it, and then we shall have to pass on to something else. Apparently - this is a traditional Indian story - there was a certain guru with lots of disciples, [360] and one day somebody brought him as a present a small kitten. And he got quite fond of this kitten, and he used to keep it and it used to sit in his lap and sleep in his lap, and so on. So eventually the kitten became a bit troublesome, and when the guru wanted to sit for his evening meditation, the kitten wouldn't allow it. The kitten wanted to play and gambol about. So, in the end, to prevent it troubling him, the guru fastened the kitten to a little stick by a string, and stuck the stick in the ground at some distance away; then he could get on with his meditation. But the disciples saw this and thought, 'Why is he doing that? Why does he always stake a kitten near by when he does his meditation? There must be a reason. There is some esoteric significance in this. It probably helps his meditation in some esoteric way.' (Laughter throughout.) So they all went off to the bazaar and they all bought kittens, and whenever they sat for meditation they put a stick in the ground and tied their kitten to it and meditated, just like the guru!

This is one of my stories, which I heard in India somewhere or other. This is quite worth retelling.

Devaraja: Maybe we could retell something similar in terms of the postcards you send!

S: I don't know about that ...!

Devaraja: Some of the interpretations that are put on your postcards!

S: Well, they might be right, might be wrong, I don't know. I haven't heard. Anyway, that is an example of the sort of story that could well be retold: stories from traditional sources.

There are lots like that.

Anyway, any further query on these views?

'Some held that the self is beyond death, others that the self is not beyond death.'

These are the two extreme views: eternalism, that there is a self which persists unchanged after death, after the death of the physical body, and the other that the self is cut off, as it were, at the time of death. Buddhism, of course, maintains that there is a continuity of the ever-changing process, from life to life, but not the continuation of any unchanging psychical element, nor the abrupt cutting off of a psychical element at the time of death, so that nothing is left: a middle way between eternalism and nihilism.

It is also interesting what the Buddha says about the ascetics:

'...by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious, lived wounding one another with the weapons of the tongue, maintaining: "Dhamma is such and such, dhamma is not such and such; it is, it is not.'" And so on. This is what he elsewhere calls wordy warfare. And then the verse:

'O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim Of brahmin and recluse the honoured name!
For, quarrelling, each to his view they cling. Such folk see only one side of a thing.'

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The verse suggests that brahmins and recluses - who enjoy, after all, such a high reputation, who are so honoured merely by virtue of the fact that they are brahmins and recluses, or call themselves brahmins and recluses - are just wasting their time in wrangling, clinging to one-sided views. So it suggests that this is not at all appropriate for those who are supposed to be leading an active spiritual life, this purely theoretical disputation about views which don't really matter one way or the other from the spiritual point of view at all.

Sagaramati: Does this mean there is absolutely no value in thinking about things like that?

S: No: these, of course, are the *akrita vasthunis*, the undetermined views, in fact the undeterminable views, which are pairs of antinomies. But there are other sort of general reflections which are useful. Sometimes the Buddha mentions these - that there are in the world beings who have attained a higher level of consciousness, even Buddhas. Such beings do actually exist. This is a profitable reflection. Or that there is a law of karma, a law of the conservation of moral effort, and that there is some benefit to be derived from making an earnest spiritual effort. Such reflections are profitable. It is these antinomial propositions that have no direct bearing on the spiritual life one way or another that the Buddha is discouraging people from discussing or taking sides about. Also it becomes clear that quite a few so-called philosophical and so-called religious views, opinions, doctrines, beliefs, are only rationalizations of quite limited perceptions, or even of misunderstandings.

All right, let's go on to the next episode, which is basically the same as the preceding one, except that I believe different views are mentioned. Let's go through it. The verse also, the

udana, is slightly different.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. (The same as the previous sutta down to)... there were some recluses and brahmins who spoke in favour of this, held this view; that both the self and the world are eternal, that this is truth, the other view is infatuation. Others, that both the self and the world are non-eternal ... that both the world and the self are both eternal and non-eternal ... that they are neither eternal nor non-eternal.

S: There you get the famous catra skoti, the four alternatives, the four points, the four positions: is, is not, both, neither.

'Some held that both the self and the world are self-made; others that they are made by another ... some that they are both self-made and made by another; others that they are neither self-made nor made by another, but that both the self and the world are unintentional [362] in origin.

Some held that both weal and woe and the self and the world are eternal; others that they are not. Some held that weal and woe and the self and the world are both eternal and non-eternal ... others that they are neither eternal nor non-eternal.

Some held that weal and woe, the self and the world are self-made ... others that they are made by another. Some held that they are both self-made and made by another... others that they are neither, but unintentional in origin; that this is truth, any other view is infatuation. They, by nature quarrelsome (as in sutta iv), maintained, Dhamma is such and such, dhamma is not such and such. It is. It is not.'

Now a great number of monks ... repeated these views to the Exalted One, who replied: 'Monks, the Wanderers holding other views are blind, unseeing; they know not the profitable, they know not the unprofitable; they know not dhamma, they know not what is not dhamma. In their ignorance of these things they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious (maintaining their several views thus and thus).'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim Of brahmin and recluse the honoured name!
For down they sink in midst of crossing o'er, Failing to win firm footing on the shore.'

S: So it is the same episode, virtually, without the illustrative parable, and also with a different list of opposing views. The opposing views here seem a bit more sophisticated than those in the previous episode. There is one particular pair that is of special, almost contemporary, interest:

'Some held that weal and woe, the self and the world are self-made ... others that they are made by another.'

We were talking about this the other day. Some apparently hold that your state of happiness depends entirely on your own efforts, others that it depends entirely upon others, entirely upon environment. These are two extreme views; and we could say that the truth is

somewhere in between, that they are interdependent. You are not entirely dependent for your positive mental state upon just yourself, irrespective of environment; nor is it merely dependent on the environment. The truth lies somewhere in between. This is really an unreal opposition, an unreal antithesis. Both factors have to be taken into consideration here.

ABC: The last two lines of the verse seem to suggest that they have reached the stage of considering these views by some form of non-attachment in the first place, so they have got some way towards the Stream or just crossing it; but by grabbing hold of something, some attachment, [363] they have sunk in midstream.

S: Yes, right. Because they are at least sramanas and brahmanas; they have made a start; at least they are living that sort of life, but they have got bogged down in these one-sided views, so they sink as it were in midstream. The 'midstream', of course, should not be taken too literally; not that they are literally halfway to Nirvana, then get bogged down in one-sided views. They have certainly made a start, they have taken up the spiritual life. Unfortunately, however, they have got bogged down by being over-occupied with these different opinions, these different one-sided views.

Subhuti: It is usually the finest of people like marxists and so forth, who have at least faced the question of how things should be. They get sort of caught up ...

S: Yes, right. Also, it says 'Failing to win firm footing on the shore'. They are trying to find their firm footing where a firm footing cannot be found. They are trying to find a firm footing in views, in one-sided views, by insisting on those views in a very dogmatic way; but there is no firm footing to be found there. The firm footing is to be found only in one's own spiritual experience. So they are trying to get a firm footing where, by the very nature of things, a firm footing cannot be found. So it is a rather desperate attempt, and a vain attempt.

Sagaramati: Would this be similar to the thing about trying to become one with a concept?

S: Or trying to find security in a concept. Taking a concept as something absolute, or pinning your whole faith and belief and security on that.

Devaraja: There seems to be quite a development in this one from the last one, in that they seem to be coming much closer to the issue of suffering.

S: That's true, yes. It is interesting that here there are virtually three different versions of the same episode: the two that we have read and then the next one. And out of these three, one is illustrated with the parable, and they have all got different verses. It is as though there were a number of different versions of the episode, as though perhaps the episode was repeated quite often. As several historians have pointed out, in the days of the Buddha there was this ferment of intellectual opinion, this multiplicity of views in the India of the Buddha's day, in north-eastern India among ascetics and brahmins especially. What the Buddha himself describes very often as a forest of views, a wilderness of views, a tangle of views.

The shore, in the udana, seems to me not the further shore of Nirvana but the shore of one's own actual personal experience of things on the spiritual path. The water in the midst of which one sinks is the water of discussion and debate. One remains in that indefinitely and never gets as far as any firm footing... (Gap in recording.) ...on the shore of one's own

spiritual experience ...

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: You mentioned ... the shore, the four floods of karma. What are they?

S: The four floods - or two? The four floods. This is not dissimilar to the asravas. There is the flood of karma, then there is the flood of ditthi, or view. I forget what the other two are. They may even be actually the same. It is the same kind of group - the four okhas (?). It is the flood of samsara, as it says here. So the water in the midst of which they sink - yes, it is in general the flood of samsara, and specifically the flood of mere discussion and debate. They don't get to the further shore.

Sagaramati: The floods, as it were, sweep you away.

S: Sweep you away, mm.

Well, we have gone a little over time; never mind. I think we will leave the third version of that episode till tomorrow. It is only the udana that is different, but it introduces a rather different idea that we may need to spend some time over.

(Recording switched off, but resumes.)

Subhuti: ... four positions, specifically in relation to that one of weal and woe being self-made or made by another. What would you say that the Buddhist position was in relation to those four positions?

S: Ah. If I was pressed, I would say it's the third one - that both factors have to be taken into consideration. But apparently the Buddha wasn't even happy about insisting on that as a sort of dogma, in a one-sided manner.

Devaraja: Perhaps these people were trying to pick up on the psycho-metaphysical absolute something, rather than just something of relative psychological value, which category 3 - presumably if the Buddha was category 3, say, he would be applying it as something that is psychologically ...

ABC: ... beyond.

S: There is also, perhaps, a difference between views which represent pairs of opposites which are actually antinomies in the strict philosophical, Kantian sense, and sets of four views which represent alternative possibilities, one or another of which may be closer to the truth than the others. If, for instance, you take the antinomy of the universe as either limited in space or not limited in space, it is impossible, by virtue of the basic misunderstanding involved - that is to say, the misunderstanding of thinking that space is something objective, boxlike, a container, and so on - that either of the two alternatives should be true. But where an antinomy is not involved, but merely various possibilities, there is a possibility that one or another of those should be the truth, or at least nearer to the truth than the others. So, in this second episode, we seem to have not pairs of propositions which are antinomies but merely sets of four alternatives.

Subhuti: It is not one of the undetermined questions?

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S: In this sense, it would not be. Though, actually, some of the undetermined questions are in this fourfold form. But I think an undetermined question in a fourfold form is possible only when the first two forms constitute an antinomy. So you can have two kinds of fourfold proposition: where the fourfold proposition arises out of the duplication of the original antinomy, and where it arises out of the multiplication of a non-antinomial position. So, in the case of the view which is a non-antinomial proposition, the wrongness consists mainly - apart from the fact of its objective truth or untruth - in the vehemence and one-sidedness and attachment with which you hold it, even though it may be a view which is itself correct or helpful.

So in the case of an antinomial proposition, you are holding on to a proposition which is absolutely impossible; it cannot possibly be the truth. But there is also the possibility that a view is true, represents the truth - at least to some extent - but that you are holding on to it with an unjustifiable degree of attachment. And, of course, in the Mahayana especially, and in Zen in particular, they make the point that even the correct views, the Perfect Views, of Buddhism itself, the principles of Buddhism itself must not be held on to in the wrong sort of way, with attachment or neurotic clinging and so on. This point is made very strongly and clearly.

: That would imply that there is something underneath that they weren't conscious of, that they were ...

S: Yes, that you were holding on to the right view not simply because the right view was a right view but because you needed to attach yourself to something.

: Yes, like ...

: ... concept of truth.

S: Oh, yes. Quite definitely. Truth as facticity. Sometimes people think of truth as facticity in a situation where that sort of truth is simply not applicable.

: What is facticity?

S: Something existing objectively as a sort of ascertainable fact. Like, for instance, 'What is art?' That is, trying to evaluate what is art on a sort of factual basis: that there is a thing called art which can be objectively measured and ascertained - where there is a sort of fact, and not a value.

One can see if one reads works like the Sutta Nipata a slight shift of emphasis, from the earliest to still relatively early Buddhism, with regard to the evaluation of views. The suggestion seems to be, at the very earliest period, that all views are as it were wrong. The disciple is asked to discard all views. There is not even any question of right views and wrong views; just get rid of all views. This comes out strongly in the Sutta Nipata, especially, as far as I recollect, in the Utthakavada, which was referred to by the elder Sona, which he in fact recited in front of the Buddha. But later there comes to be the distinction of right views and

wrong views. But even right views can be held in the wrong sort of [366] way. In other words, the rightness depends not only upon the views themselves but also on the way in which you hold them. So you can't even regard the right views themselves as expressing a sort of actually existent situation. At least to some extent, the rightness is in the attitude with which you hold the views or approach the views.

In other words, if you say, 'The Buddha is Enlightened, and nobody else is Enlightened. I'm going to take on anyone who says anything to the contrary. I'm ready to fight them! I am ready to give my life for this!' - you are not, as it were, taking up a wrong attitude towards a right view. It is worse than that. Your whole attitude distorts the view itself. So you are not exactly a misguided person wrongly holding a right view; in a way, you don't even hold a right view. So you cannot separate the rightness of the right view from the way in which you hold that right view.

: In the ..., I seem to vaguely remember once a rather hefty person coming up to me in a very threatening way.

S (aggressively): 'Are you a pacifist?'

Sona (very aggressively): 'Are you a pacifist? I am!!' (Laughter.)

S: On the other hand, a nice kind recruiting sergeant, coming up to, patting you on the back and saying, 'Would you like to be a soldier, sonny?' (Laughter.) Anyway, that's all, I think, for today.

Devaraja: Let's hope we never do that with a Mitra.

S: Hit them on the head with the old metta! There is a little story about that, but it is in print, so I'm not going to tell it.

: Go on.

S: No, I published it in the Maha Bodhi Journal some years ago. When someone is busy compiling this collection of parables I shall just give you the cutting to include, or to rewrite. This is an original story of my own, actually, but told as though it was actually true.

There is also the parable of the mustard seed. That is a very famous one, isn't it?

: You mean the Christian one?

S: No, the Buddhist one; it shouldn't really be mustard seed, though, should it? The sesamum seed, I think.

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'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

(All as in the previous sutta, except the prose and verse of uplift.)

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'This world of men, given over to the idea of "I am the agent," bound up with the idea "another is the agent," understand not truly this thing; they have not seen it as a thorn. For one who looks at this thorn with caution, the idea "I am the agent" exists not, the idea "another is the agent" exists not.'

This folk is led by vain conceits, Fettered thereby, bondmen thereby. They, thro' their views thus quarrelsome, Get not beyond the rolling round.'

S: So this is the same episode as before, but with different udanas. The prose udana is concerned chiefly with the idea that 'I am the agent' or 'Another is the agent'. This seems in a way to hark back to that udana we had some days ago, where one is responsible oneself for grasping the upadhyi, as in the Bodhicaryavatara: you grasp the body, he grasps the stick. He grasps the stick, you grasp the body. So the pain that arises when his stick comes into contact with your body is the result of those two conditions coming together. You are not responsible for the pain arising, you are not the sole agent. He is not responsible either. He is not the sole agent. So there is no question of sole undivided responsibility. The pain that arises arises in dependence upon certain conditions, on a complex of conditions; not on any one condition or one factor. So it is something like that which is being got at here. So one should try to think not so much in terms of 'I did this' or 'he did that', or 'He is the agent for this' or 'I am the agent for that', so much as in terms of certain causes and conditions coming together and producing a certain result, a certain effect. one should try to see this as it were objectively. In other words, instead of trying to see things in terms of exclusive, solely responsible, agents or causes, one tries to see things in terms of conditioned co-production.

The udana is not completely clear - in fact, this one and the next two seem a bit confused as to the text.

'This world of men, given over to the idea of "I am the agent," bound up with the idea "another is the agent," understand not truly this thing.'

Presumably the thing that is being referred to is the truth of conditioned co-production, dependent origination, to put it broadly.

'They have not seen it as a thorn.'

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They have not seen adherence to any of these one-sided views as a thorn, as an affliction, as a hindrance to the spiritual life, a hindrance to Insight.

'For one who looks at this thorn with caution, the idea "I am the agent" exists not, the idea "another is the agent" exists not.'

Such a one sees what happens in terms of conditioned co-production or dependent origination, or conditionality. But you see the difference between the two attitudes? - one thinking in terms of 'agent' and as it were putting the whole responsibility for a certain situation on an agent, either you or me, as it were; and the other trying to understand all the factors involved, all the causes and conditions, and trying to see, in a quite objective manner,

that the situation has arisen out of the interaction of those causes and conditions. It is not so much that you are doing it or that somebody else is doing it.

Sona: Could you apply this to the case of spiritual progress, where you have the idea of the gravitational pull, that after a while it is not so much you who are making the effort as something pulling you?

S: Yes, the effort is being made. Supposing, for instance, to give an example, you organize a meeting and the meeting is successful. You could adopt the attitude: 'I have organized the meeting, I am the agent; the success is all due to me,' etc. But if you look at it carefully - all right, you organized the meeting: what does that mean? First of all, the meeting was held at a hall. Well, that hall was already there, it was built by certain people, say, 50 or 100 years ago. So the success of the meeting also depended upon the presence of that hall. Then maybe there were various other people distributing leaflets; various other people preparing advertisements; there were compositors setting up those advertisements; there were printers printing those advertisements. Then there were people distributing the newspapers in which those advertisements appeared, and then there were people actually reading those newspapers and seeing your advertisements. And then again, there were trams and buses and trains bringing people to the meeting. These trams and trains and buses were all being driven by people; they are part of the whole motor transport system and rail system. If that had not been there, presumably your meeting would not have been a success.

So you start, in this way, looking at your meeting and the success of your meeting as a result of a vast complex of causes and conditions, amongst which you are only one. And then you see it in a quite different light - that that meeting, and the success of that meeting, is just the net result of a process of interaction of a vast number of different factors. You could even trace it back, eventually, to the whole universe, as it were - that, the whole social system within which the meeting takes place. You are just one factor. Maybe you are a quite important factor, but you are not the only one, and you would not be justified in having the sole, exclusive attitude of 'I was the agent, I was the doer.'

This is an illustration of the kind of thing that I think is meant here. The text is not altogether clear, but the general meaning is clear.

In other words, we tend not to see all the other factors involved. We tend only to take note of the part that we play and attribute everything [369] to that. This is a very common human failing, if it is something good and successful that we are proud of. If it is something we are not happy with, then we attribute it to somebody else. So the first could be described as due more to craving and the other as due more to aversion.

Suppose the meeting went wrong. We don't say, 'I didn't organize it properly,' but we say, 'Oh well, not so many people turned up. There was a strike that day. They would have come in great numbers, but there weren't any trains, so therefore they didn't come.' Or we might say, 'Well, it wasn't advertised properly. The people who were responsible for advertising didn't do their job properly.' Or we might say, 'It was the wrong sort of hall, the acoustics were all wrong. People don't go to that hall. They don't like it.' Anything rather than say, 'It was my fault.' Then you put it on the other; the other is the agent in that sort of case. So you might formulate this generally and say that when craving is predominant - and craving, of course, is connected with pleasure - then we tend to think of the self as agent in such situations. When

aversion is predominant, when the situation is displeasing, we tend to think of the other as the agent and of the other as responsible.

You can see this at work all the time. People are quite happy to accept responsibility and credit when things go right, but not so happy to accept responsibility and blame when things go wrong. In both cases, they tend to think in terms of one single cause, one single agent, not in terms of a whole complex of conditions co-operating, in which you are just one. Perhaps sometimes (you are) the decisive one, but it is very finely balanced. You can't always tell.

Devaraja: It's more like greed is just one of the predominant types and it's more like the extra sliver on the balance of the scales, etc.

S: Yes, right. Think of the vast complex of conditions that brought about this retreat and made it possible. There are so many of them. First of all, that there is an Udana to study anyway - you know, this goes right back 2,500 years, directly to the Buddha himself. If the Buddha hadn't given these teachings, if they hadn't been collected by those monks in this particular collection and handed down for centuries and then written down, and then manuscripts transmitted, and then manuscripts studied and manuscripts edited in book form and then translated - well, (but for all that) we couldn't have had the study we have had. That is just one factor, but it is a factor going back thousands of years. And supposing the good lady who owns this place happened not to have acquired it and organized it in this way, then we shouldn't be sitting here at this moment - but how she came to acquire this place I don't know. Maybe someone left her some money, or maybe she won the pools - I don't know. Maybe she inherited it. But that also is a factor. So we can't really think of ourselves as the agent, or another as the agent, in any situation. So this way of reflecting and thinking and considering obviously lessens the force or the strength of what is popularly called egotism.

There is another aspect of this, too, which is much more difficult to express. This we may describe as the self, or the agent, even, as being as it were alienated subjects. Do you know what I mean by that? Don you get any idea?

Devaraja: Yes, you are not dependent upon conditions. Is that what you mean?

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S: No. By 'alienated subject' I mean a subject which is abstracted from the concrete process of action, which is then regarded as pertaining to that alienated subject. Do you see what I am getting at?

: Separate from concrete objective conditions, separate ...

S: The actual process of action.

: What you said at first ... I am just recalling.

S: Yes, it isn't very clear. Let me give a concrete example. Supposing you say, 'I am walking.' Is there a you that is walking apart from the actual concrete process of walking? In other words, is there a walker apart from the walking? Buddhism, of course, says no, but that what you think of as the self is only a sort of name, a label, for the sum total of all those processes; that those processes do not belong to a self which is itself not a process, (but) an unchanging.

But sometimes you have a sort of eerie feeling of not being one with what you are actually doing. This is what I mean by alienation, the alienated subject. You are not sort of aware of it in a mindful way, but you are aware of it in an alienated way. It ties up, therefore, with the alienated awareness, the alienated subject. You are not fully with, or not fully into, what you are actually doing. There is a little fictitious self, a rather ghostly little self, which has somehow got separated from the concrete process and is regarding it. It is sort of split off from it. It doesn't really exist apart from it, it is not really the agent separate from the process as such. It is a little sort of split-off bit of the process which is as it were standing aside from it, in an uneasy way, and not able to feel one with the process; not able to feel that it is doing what it is doing. And then, of course, it, or you, feels very unreal. I am sure you have had this sort of experience sometimes? I know some people have had it when taking, or trying to take, the Puja and are not quite in the right mood. Do you know what I mean? This is what I mean by the alienated subject: the subject which is cut off from the concrete process of action.

ABC: Does that mean ... like meditating when you don't particularly feel like it, in that way ... ?

S: No, it isn't quite as simple as that. Because sometimes you can recognize, or even accept, that you, or part of you, doesn't like doing something. But consciously and awarely you make a total decision that you are going to do it. So you are fully into that decision. So this would not result in the alienated situation. But this depends upon your knowing the situation and not deceiving yourself, but making up your mind that 'Even though there is a part of me which does not want to do this, I am going to do it, or we are going to do it.' It is going to be done. But if you don't recognize that there is a part of you that doesn't want to do it, doesn't want to participate, if you try to ignore that or gloss it over and still go into the situation, then of course you may very well get this sensation of being alienated from what you are doing, or at least not fully into it.

But if you look back over your lives, you will probably come to the conclusion that there were not many situations in which you felt completely at one with what you were actually doing. I am not thinking, of course, of situations of total unawareness - they can hardly be counted - but [371] situations in which you are completely into what you were doing, but at the same time quite aware; not, of course, in an alienated way. Very often these are situations in which you are doing something creative, something in which you really believe and something into which all your energies can flow. Then the idea of a doer, paradoxically, does not arise. When you are fully into what you are doing, you do not say 'I am doing it.' You are completely absorbed.

Sona: It is a bit like third dhyana.

S: Right, yes. There is no mental activity, including the mental activity which says 'I am doing this job, I am doing that job.' Or even 'He is doing that.' I mean you can have a sort of working relationship with somebody else in which there is no thought of what you do and what he does. Like you do even find it in some sports - you know - I don't know about tennis, because I've never played tennis, but I imagine you could experience it in tennis, when each is sort of hitting the ball back and forth and each is responding to the other's play, but is not thinking in terms of 'I make this move,' 'He makes that move.' It is quite spontaneous, as it were. Do you get what I mean? So this happens very often in a working situation, especially where there is something rhythmical or you know each other very well. Then there is that

sense of working together. You do have the sort of consciousness or awareness of a situation in which you are both functioning - not 'I am doing this and he is doing that.' You get this, no doubt, in a very smoothly functioning team of any kind - that is, a team of people who do know one another very well.

One can even find it in a situation where there is something to be done, and then people look around to see what needs to be done, and they just one by one start joining in and doing it, and everybody is quite aware of what everybody else is doing, but there is no sensation of 'I am doing this bit and he is doing that bit.' It is quite spontaneous.

So it adds up to the fact that one should try to see one's own contribution as one factor in a total situation, a sort of feeling or sense of the other factors, especially when those other factors are other people, other individuals; and not have a one-sided consciousness of what oneself is doing and what others are doing, in an alienated way. And also be fully and completely into and with whatever one is doing oneself, and not have a part of oneself split off from that and watching as it were from the outside in an alienated way. Then, of course, this refers to 'my point of view', as in the udana of the two previous episodes; especially the one before last:

'O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim Of brahmin and recluse the honoured name!
For, quarrelling, each to his view they cling. Such folk see only one side of a thing.'

So, 'quarrelling, each to his view they cling'. When a discussion arises, there is a certain topic being discussed. In an objective, ..., skilful discussion, you consider the subject and you see it from your point of view and express that; and then somebody else sees something from his point of view, and he expresses that. And you all see what is being expressed by the different people as contributing to the discussion, as an element in the discussion. But you don't identify any particular remark or any particular line of thought as 'mine', with the idea that you must cling on to that, support that and defend that at all costs. You just [372] see all these different contributions being made - some, perhaps, more valuable than others - and gradually adding up to the total discussion. It may be that, in the course of that discussion, if one person makes a remark and then another, certain points of view are sort of dropped, (because) they obviously don't belong, and others become clearer and stronger; and then a sort of conclusion emerges. So it is a sort of co-operative process, almost a co-operative venture.

But if it is 'my opinion' against 'your opinion', then it becomes a sort of ... and ding-dong battle, and this is not at all skilful or healthy. It is quite easy to tell whether it is one kind of discussion or the other, whether it is discussion or just dispute. You get a completely different feeling from the whole thing.

Sometimes, of course, it's mixed. It is very rarely purely this or purely that. Sometimes it changes from this to that and back again. But it is quite important to think more in terms of putting forward a point of view, even one with which you are identified in a healthy way; but not 'This is my point of view,' so that if someone differs from it they are attacking you, and you feel attacked, or at least threatened, and feel the need to defend or to retaliate and so on. This, needless to say, is very common and everybody has experienced it at some time or other.

Anyway, any query on all that?

Perhaps we should go a little more into this idea - it is very important - of being completely into what you are doing and completely with it. Perhaps the best word to describe this is wholeheartedness. There is a verse in the Bible somewhere - I think it is the Book of Proverbs which says 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might' (Ecclesiastes ix, 10.) I think this is very apposite here. So many people are halfhearted, they are not really doing what they are supposed to be doing with all their might. Because you have to find something in which you can really believe; that means doing it with all your energy, all your interest, all your enthusiasm, not halfheartedly, not just with a part of yourself, not with doubts and reservations; doing it in a committed way. If you can't do things in that way, or don't know what there is for you to do in that way, it is best in a way not to do anything, and just wait.

Sona: It reminds me of how important ... life is ... You spend so many years working in an office where only half of you is working in the office.

S: Sometimes, though, it seems to me that we hold back and put less of ourselves into something than we could, even accepting that the situation itself is limited. But we don't even do as much as we could, or put as much of ourselves into it as could be put. Very few situations are completely ideal in the abstract, but if we put more of ourselves into them, we will find them more satisfactory or satisfying. If we make up our minds to it and that we are in the situation, we have got to do it - 'Oh, well, I will do it really well.' That is a much better attitude; rather than just do the minimum that you can get away with. The doing of the minimum that you can get away with is a form of expression of resentment against being in the situation, and that isn't healthy. It is best just to buckle to and do the best that you really can, even if that isn't the ideal situation that you would have chosen for yourself.

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Sagaramati: That brings in the point that came up before about your development being distinct from what you do for others ...

S: Ah, yes.

Sagaramati: - that if you're doing something you don't really want to do, you can't develop.

S: Yes, this can be very much misunderstood and misused or misapplied (the idea) that it isn't good for you to do something that you don't want to do. Well, who is that you that doesn't want to do it? Is it the best you or the worst and weakest?

It is also as though quite a few people have lost the capacity to act in a really potent way, and can express themselves only by not acting, or getting in the way of others acting. In other words, their mode of expression has become negative rather than positive. You say, 'Let's do so-and-so,' and they can't respond with 'Oh, yes' - there's not enough oomph, as it were, there; they are not active and positive enough. They can only respond with 'Oh, no, I don't think so,' or 'I don't think you should do it.' In other words, the only form of self-assertion of which they are capable is a negative one. The only action of which they are capable is an action that hinders action, and we get a lot of this. Blake - to quote him again; I'm afraid he keeps popping up - goes into this and says that the hindering of action is not virtue - I am rather paraphrasing him - that virtue is in the action itself. Virtue should not be thought of in terms of abstention from action, but in terms of action, positive action. If you think of virtue in terms of abstention, you tend to think of yourself as propagating virtue when you are

hindering other people from action. Therefore you often find people seeking all sorts of reasons for not doing something, and they are often very good at that.

Does all this have a familiar ring?

Voices: Very.

S: Pity, isn't it! But one might as well open one's eyes to the situation, both so far as it applies to oneself and as far as it applies to others.

There may be various social, even historical reasons why we feel it difficult to be into what we are doing completely. There may be a little fund of resentment in the case of some people, but that is no excuse; once we have seen the situation, once our eyes have been opened to it, we should take steps to remedy it. Probably if there are quite a lot of things that you are having to do only halfheartedly, or feel that you have to do halfheartedly, it is best to break off and stop for a while, just not do anything; and then wait until you really do feel like doing something or other and then do that; and then wait again until you really feel like doing something else, then do that. And then cautiously think in terms of what it would be best for you to do - what you ought to do not 'ought' in the sense of obligation but in the ideal sense; and then make up your mind to do that, completely and wholeheartedly. But doing what you like in the sense of following your own whims and fancies certainly is not a very healthy or positive thing.

In very extreme and severe cases, when you have been into so many things that you weren't really interested in, it may even be necessary for a while simply just to follow your whims and fancies until deeper [374] urges and more genuine desires start coming up - but this is only in very extreme cases. So far as most people are concerned I am sure there should be a much more determined effort to put more energy into what they are actually doing - assuming it to be something which is not essentially unskilful. It is because people are into so many things that they can't really identify with - I mean to which they can't really put their energies - that they feel much of the time only half there or half here, only half alive, only half functioning or even much less than half.

Any query or comment on all this? (Long pause.)

ABC: I must admit, when I was doing my A-level I felt very halfhearted; I felt quite a split between my will to do it and what I felt I really wanted to do in my heart. I thought that was quite a split ...

Sagaramati: Is there any point in gritting your teeth? You know that something is good and you should do it, but you really don't feel like doing it at the time. Is there any point in forcing yourself to do it?

S: I think sometimes there is. If you really genuinely do see that you ought to be doing that particular thing, in the ideal sense of 'ought', and that it is only a very weak and reluctant part of you that is not willing to co-operate and join in, then sometimes you may have to grit your teeth and force yourself into it. Very often, then you will find that once you have done that you really are able to get into that particular thing. But perhaps you shouldn't have to do this too much, or in too many situations. Also you have to sort out, 'What is that part that doesn't

want to co-operate, and why? Is it a part with legitimate needs that are not being fulfilled, or is it merely some weak and neurotic part that just has to be not encouraged at all and allowed to wither away as quickly as possible?' One is, for the time being, relatively unintegrated; there are different parts of oneself, as it were different aspects, and sometimes there are healthy needs of other aspects of one's being to be considered. So in formulating one's overall objectives, one's long-range strategy, you have to take the needs of all these different aspects of yourself into consideration - not pandering to any neurotic element in you.

For instance, just to give an example, supposing you had a sort of healthy, open-air side of your nature, that likes walks in the country and sunshine and swimming and exercise and so on. It would be unwise to leave that out of consideration altogether and occupy yourself exclusively with studies, meetings, lectures, meditation and so on. Sooner or later that side will start troubling you and you will feel unwilling to carry on with your study and all that kind of thing, because there will be a pull from that other aspect of yourself. But, inasmuch as that is a healthy aspect, you ought to have made some provision for it and kept it a bit happy and satisfied, so that it would not disturb you in pursuing your overall objective. But if it is something merely neurotic say you want to go and see your mother every weekend and feel really upset because you can't do that - or your girl friend, that is much the same! - then you shouldn't give way to that. That is neurotic. The more you give way to it, the more clamorous it may become. So first of all, make up your mind which aspects of yourself are as it were healthy and deserving of consideration and then formulate your long-range objectives, and your actual programme, your actual way of life: trying to distinguish between healthy needs and neurotic craving - which is, of course, sometimes quite [375] difficult. You may even consult your friends. They may have a more objective view than you have yourself.

: I sometimes feel like doing one thing when I am in a concentrated mind, and not doing that thing when I am in a less concentrated state, and I wonder whether it would be a good idea to act (while in the) positive state of mind, even when I know that later on I may not be in that state, I might not actually want to do that.

S: Well, positive states of mind are healthy states of mind, and negative states of mind are - well, one could almost say neurotic states of mind. But you have got to be careful in formulating your plan of action, your programme, in your positive state of mind. You have to take into consideration the fact that you do sometimes get into negative states, and when you are in a positive state not formulate your plans in such a way that they are going to make the negative states worse. But not pander to them, not indulge them; just allow maybe a little leeway, but without actually giving in to them. But this has to be done quite carefully, or they very quickly get the upper hand if you give them half a chance.

So you should probably take a very firm stand where neurotic cravings are concerned - those which are definitely neurotic - and give quite a bit of scope for those other aspects of yourself which are definitely healthy. In principle, the difference is quite clear, though in particular instances it may not always be so easy to tell.

Devaraja: Quite often, neurotic cravings travel under the guise of healthy needs!

S: Quite, yes. What do you think are the criteria for distinguishing neurotic cravings from healthy needs?

Devaraja: I think maybe the healthy needs have a sort of usefulness about them of some kind. Whereas the neurotic cravings don't seem to have any objective usefulness.

S: Also one can say the healthy needs can be satisfied, whereas neurotic cravings can't be satisfied. The healthy needs can be satisfied, and they will then leave you alone for a while, maybe quite a while. But the neurotic need is always bothering you, even when it is supposedly satisfied. Say, in the case of food: if you just have a healthy appetite, you really look forward to your food when you are hungry and really enjoy it. Once you have had it, that's that, you forget all about food and go off and do something else quite happily. But if you have a neurotic craving for food, then even though your stomach is satisfied and your genuine healthy hunger appeased, you still go on snacking and nibbling and wondering what else you can eat.

: The non-satisfaction of a healthy need doesn't lead to a negative state of mind.

S: It might if prolonged - you know, again as in the case of food. It might. But you can recover from that quite easily. But it seems as though a neurotic craving is associated with a negative state of mind, even when it has been satisfied. There is often anxiety present, even [376] in the midst of the satisfaction, and grasping and possessiveness, especially in so-called relationships.

: Would you say that was the criterion of whether a craving was neurotic or healthy - whether it can be satisfied or not?

S: Yes, I wouldn't like to say that it is the main criterion, but it is certainly a useful guideline, as it were. It depends on the nature of the need. The need for food is a basic and recurring one; other healthy needs may not be quite of that kind. You can hold some of them off for a while, quite a long while, without any sort of harm to yourself.

: Do you think there is a healthy need for sex?

S: I think this differs very much from individual to individual, according to temperament and constitution. I think that, in most cases, what people think of as a healthy need is definitely a neurotic craving. I think that the healthy need, if there is such a thing - as probably there is for some people - shows itself when you don't think about it before it comes along, you enjoy it when it's there and don't think about it after it's gone. But I think probably that very few people are in this sort of state or situation. At most, they experience a slight physical tension, but nothing that can't be supported quite easily, nothing which prevents them from getting involved deeply with other things. Except, of course, one may say, at the time of adolescence; that is a rather peculiar time; but once one has got over that - eh? But I am not completely certain even about that, because in some primitive communities they don't seem to have an adolescence; they don't seem to be bothered at the time of adolescence, the time of puberty, in the way that people are in our society. I hesitate very much to say that there can be a healthy need for sex in a general way, because some people are eager to seize hold of any excuse or anything I am supposed to have said. So I think I would say, as a general quotable statement for this particular subject, that a healthy need for sex is extremely rare in our society, and that one should probably - or no doubt - take it for granted in most cases, almost all cases, that it is a neurotic craving, not a healthy need. Our sexual needs have become as vitiated as the need for food. Very often, what one thinks of as a sexual need is in fact a neurotic emotional need,

but the neurotic emotional need tends to be 'satisfied' only in the allegedly sexual situation.

Also there are micchaditthis in this field - you know, quite recent ones, not particularly Buddhist or even particularly un-Buddhist ... micchaditthis: for instance, that sex has to be justified by being associated with love, whatever that may mean. I think this is a quite noticeable micchaditthi in this particular field. That sex somehow becomes all right if it is associated with love, in a rather clinging, sentimental possessive sense - it's all-right then. And that a straightforward sexual attraction is sometimes regarded as in a way insulting, which seems to be ridiculous.

: There's lots of women ...s going around ...

S: Pardon?

: A lot of - well - (laughter) female Friends go around saying [377] how much they are being used as sex symbols and sex objects, when it might just be the expression of a healthy sexuality. And they have gone to the opposite extreme.

S: And what is that?

: Well, regarding any kind of expression of sexuality as using them.

S: As a sort of affront, yes.

: There is a sort of opposing micchaditthi - well, not so much a micchaditthi, but ...

S: Well, they usually go in pairs.

: - that becomes a justification for - it becomes that sex doesn't need to be associated with love but becomes a sort of justification for quite unskillful, maybe negative, destructive behaviour.

S: Well, for sex to be associated with anything even mildly sadistic is just as much neurotic.

: Mm. It becomes just a kind of ...

S: I think also one must bear in mind that from the ordinary, even animal, point of view, there is a certain roughness at least to masculine sexuality, you know? - by its very nature; if you don't have that, you might not even have the sex at all - which might be a good thing, of course, but. I think one has to beware of being a bit sort of precious about these things. Of course, natural human sexuality, especially masculine sexuality, probably is, by its very nature, rather rough. Though that doesn't necessarily mean sadistic - I mean, ... different kind of thing. But at least, if not rough, it is certainly impetuous, by its very nature. It is, after all, a form of activity, you know, and a biologically motivated activity, and with the whole thrust of nature behind it. So refine it, by all means, in a genuine way, but don't be surprised if you refine it out of existence; because the more it is refined, the less it exists. Which is a quite happy state of affairs. But don't delude yourself about the actual nature of the instinct itself. You know: it is in itself rather rough and rather crude. That is what it's like - it's meant to be like that, as it were, that's the function it fulfils. The animals don't go about their courting in a

gentle way, usually; it's usually a bit rough. These things seem to work out all right.

Sona: A scorpion ...

S: Yes, ha ha. But you know, as it were, deliberate sadism of a neurotic and perverted nature, this is of course highly undesirable, highly unskilful. This is just as bad as, if not worse than, the sentimental approach.

Devaraja: I was quite shocked by something I once saw ... I saw a bitch being had by a male dog and it was so brutal. And I was quite horrified by it, the brutality of it.

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S: But I expect the bitch didn't run away? - or didn't even try to run away, probably?

Devaraja: No, but I think I noticed that she didn't seem particularly happy.

S: Well, again, that's another micchaditthi, that sex is a sort of happiness. (Giggles.) Devaraja: Maybe, but I was just saying that was my observation. It struck me that, in a very crude way, it said a lot about human ...

S: Right, you're dead right. Most animal sexual encounters do not seem associated with much in the way of conscious gratification or personal or individual happiness. It is a natural function, a biological function. It's the mechanism whereby the species is continued. We seem to expect far too much from it, we expect heaven, as it were, from it; which is ridiculous. The best you can expect, probably, and healthily, is a certain amount of organic satisfaction for the time being. One shouldn't expect more than that.

Devaraja: Perhaps it's really - I think that for most people it's really an area best avoided, because I think it's so kind of ...

S: 'Most people' or 'most Upasakas'?

Devaraja: Well, most Upasakas ...

S: 'People' is a bit general.

Devaraja: But that maybe should apply to people in general.

S: Most people, ideally, should be Upasakas.

Devaraja: Yes, but - in that - you know, human communication is a very valuable thing, and that maybe to take it below a certain level would be to kind of create a situation in which there might be a sort of brutalization. Perhaps that should be avoided - I don't know.

S: Well, it depends on whether you have a brutal level to yourself or not. I don't think it's a question of brutal or not brutal, though, but of sub-individual.

Devaraja: Well, taking it to the level of sub-individuality, where, as in the example I gave of the dogs, an element of brutality enters into sex, then I think it should be really just sort of

steered well clear of.

S: Provided you are able for the time being to do that. But you may have to recognize for the time being that there is an element of non-individuality in your relationship with other individuals under certain circumstances. You use people in other ways; why not in that? It is not as though, if you gave up sex, you would never be using anybody.

Obviously, if there is exploitation or if there is using of one person by another to that extent, the relationship is not an individual relationship. But then the best people can do in those circumstances is just [379] to recognize quite openly and honestly that they are only partly individuals; they are still very much at the mercy of sub-individual instincts and urges, and that therefore the relationship between them is only partly a relationship between individuals; but they should try, overall, to subordinate the non-individual element in the relationship to the individual element, so that it is the individual relationship which is uppermost. At least, they should do that. Otherwise, from time to time, it is as though the individual relationship is completely in abeyance and something else is going on then; which is the sub-individual, which is the racial, the collective, the biological. And then you wake up from that as though from a dream and carry on with your individual relationship.

I think probably the whole idea of the sexual element as part of an individual relationship is a complete delusion. So I think one should see this, even though one may recognize that one isn't yet in a position to be completely individual, and therefore have one's relationships with other people completely on an individual basis - that is, with members of the opposite sex.

ABC: Does that mean that you can't have sex on an individual level ... ?

S: It would seem so. Because the motivation or the urge behind it would seem to be as it were collective; of the species, not of the individual. It is the species using the individual, as it were.

: What about married lamas?

S: What about married lamas? Well, from what I have seen of them, I am not very happy with them. I think most of those I have seen - and there aren't very many of them around - are henpecked, frankly. And that doesn't seem very desirable.

Devaraja: Does that apply to ...?

S: I am not going to mention any individual cases, but their wives give nearly all of them a quite tough time. So I don't think we can set married lamas up as an example, certainly not for ourselves. You have got to be a lama first before you can be a married lama!

Devaraja: It must be OK because they are married lamas - not a micchaditthi!

S: Well, what about all the unmarried lamas, whether you are going to follow their example?

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Devaraja: There are far more of those!

S: There are far more of those, yes. At least about 900 to 1 or something like that.

But, to go back to something that was said earlier on, about people, especially women, adopting the attitude of 'If you are sexually attracted towards me, then you are just trying to use me and exploit me' - I think this is based on a definite misunderstanding. Because that is actually the situation, at least at first; you know, that sexual attraction by its very nature is non-individual; it is really sort of physical and biological. So if you want to be sexually attracted (?attractive) at [380] all, it means a negation of individuality as such, so you should be prepared for that.

ABC: This means that, when you begin relationships, you ... kind of go through stages of being woken up and seeing what it is, and so on.

S: The situation sometimes arises in which there is a lot of confusion and vague thinking, when the woman doesn't want to be a sexual object but doesn't want to be ignored either.

Devaraja: Yes, that's right. She gets really furious (because?) she gets approached as a sexual object.

S: In other words, as a woman. But so long as you feel that you are a man, then it's very difficult to exclude that element; and she no doubt cannot exclude that element from her side either. So you get a very problematical situation. 'I don't want to be a sex object, but I don't want to be ignored either.' But, very often, if you treat a woman just as an individual, she doesn't like it at all; she feels really neglected. If you treat her as you treat, say, another man, just as another individual, she feels something is seriously wrong. If you show a sexual interest, then sometimes she recoils and says, 'Oh, I don't want to be just a sex object.' This is just an expression of current mental confusions. So if one just feels sexually attracted, one should say quite frankly, 'For the present at least, you are predominantly a sex object. If you feel co-operative about it, well, OK, fair enough. Maybe something else will develop, but that's how it is at the moment. You know, I am more conscious of you as a woman than I am of you as an individual. So if you feel like relating on that basis, fair enough, but I can't ignore the fact that you are a woman, because I happen to be a man.' You can't have it both ways. You could say, 'OK, I can, if you want, completely switch off the sexual aspect. That means relating just as individuals, and sex doesn't come into it. If you are prepared for that, fine.' But, usually, they start wanting these semi-sexual attentions and so on, even though they may say, 'No, I just want to relate as an individual.'

So really - to relate all that to what we started from - it all adds up to the fact that there is a difference between being completely into something as an individual and just letting yourself go and sinking to the sub-individual level. These two are to be distinguished. They may look alike but they are very different. To quote Blake again, who seems to be coming up quite a lot on this retreat, he says words to the effect that it's all right if you are in a passion, but not all right if a passion is in you. You see the distinction? When a passion is in you, you are just taken over, you cease to exist. The individual is in abeyance.

We haven't looked at that last verse udana:

'This folk is led by vain conceits, Fettered thereby, bondmen thereby. They, thro' their views thus quarrelsome, Get not beyond the rolling round.'

The wheel of samsara, that is. So they are quarrelsome through their views, which is a great pity. The views are supposed to be religious views, philosophical views: they are supposed to be helping them to [381] develop. But, instead of that, they become occasions of attachment and clinging and dispute and ill-feeling. In that way they become bound still more to the wheel of life, they don't get beyond it, don't get away from it, don't transcend it.

On to section vii - something different.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the Venerable Subhuti was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, having reached the concentration that is void of thought. And the Exalted One saw the venerable Subhuti so seated ... and that he had reached the concentration that is void of thought. Then the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'In whose inner self all thoughts are scattered, clean cut off without remainder, - he by escaping that fetter, is conscious of the formless; transcending the fourfold bondage, he goes not more to birth.'

S: It is not very easy to make out the meaning of this udana. The terminology seems to hang halfway between a specialized and an unspecialized vocabulary. It is not clear whether 'the formless' is the formless sphere of developed Buddhist thought, or whether it even refers to Nirvana. And this 'voidness of thought' in which Subhuti is concentrated; this could be the second dhyana, or it could be much more than that. It could be the anumittha-vimokka, the signless release, where one contemplates Reality as devoid of thought determinations. But the general idea is clear:

'In whose inner self all thoughts are scattered' ...

not that he is scattered and unconcentrated, as it were: all thoughts have been scattered away. All thoughts have disappeared, all discursive conceptual thinking. There is just pure, bright, clean consciousness or awareness. Thoughts have been 'clean cut off without remainder'. That suggests they won't come back again, or even that Insight has been attained; but discursive thinking, apart from what is objectively necessary, has been permanently transcended. He has escaped that fetter. He is 'conscious of the formless', which probably here means Nirvana; conscious of that which cannot be put into thought, which has no determinate nature, which cannot be identified as this or that; in other words, sunyata. And 'transcending the fourfold bondage, he goes not more to birth.' It is not clear what this 'fourfold bondage' is. It could be craving and views and so on, but, in general, anything that binds one down to the samsara, to the wheel of life. And the result is, 'he goes not more to birth'. There is no renewal of conditioned existence.

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So here freedom from thought, freedom from mental activity, from discursive thinking, is exemplified. So there is freedom from what we may call neurotic thinking; not thinking which is objectively necessary, when you are in that particular plane of consciousness, as when you think how to get from here to there, you think quite objectively about it. But, in

view of this discussion, and the one we had previously, it is quite important to distinguish between the two forms of what may seem to be the same activity - you know, the healthy and the unhealthy, the skilful and the unskilful forms, or at least neutral form. So there is healthy thinking as well as neurotic thinking. Healthy thinking is objective and constructive, and oriented to a definite goal. It is purposeful. But neurotic thinking is just a sort of mental ticking over, based on anxiety and insecurity. A lot of so-called philosophising belongs to this second plane of thinking.

You notice, incidentally, that the different leading disciples are frequently described as sitting cross-legged with body upright and as having reached a certain kind of concentration, a certain level of concentration; and they are practically all different, which suggests many different approaches. We haven't had this particular one before; 'having reached the concentration that is void of thought...'

: It says that he is 'etad agga of those "who dwell remote"'.

S: Well, this refers to the famous occasion on which the Buddha singled out his leading disciples and said who was best in a certain class. So of all those 'who dwell remote', those who dwell in the forest, who lead a secluded life, Subhuti was the leading one. In the same way, the Buddha distinguished who was the leading preacher of the Dharma, who was the leading monk as regards asceticism, who was the leading monk as regards psychic powers, as regards popularity, as regards personal beauty, as regards dignity of deportment, and so on. But each of the leading disciples had a special feature, something that he was best at; they were all mentioned. Subhuti was the most prominent of those who 'dwelt remote' in the depths of the forest. He, of course, reappears in the Diamond Sutra - presumably the same Subhuti.

It is interesting, in a way, that Subhuti is represented here as dwelling in that concentration which is 'void of thought', empty of thought. I don't know whether the word in the original is sunya or not, but, whether or not, it is interesting inasmuch as he appears in the Diamond Sutra which, of course, deals with sunyata. There is a definite link, a definite continuity of tradition here, because Subhuti was associated with that line of thought and experience, that which culminated in emptiness or voidness, sunyata. Therefore, it is quite natural that he should be the Buddha's interlocutor in that particular Mahayana sutra.

On, then, to episode viii.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground.

Now on that occasion at Rajagaha two gangs were enamoured of, infatuated with, a certain courtesan; [383] they fell to quarrelling, uproar and abuse over her; they attacked each other with fists, attacked each other with clods of earth, with sticks and weapons. Thus in that matter they got their death or mortal pain.

Now a great number of monks, robing themselves in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Rajagaha to quest for alms-food. Having gone their rounds in Rajagaha, returned therefrom and eaten their meal, they went to see the Exalted One, saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated they said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, here in Rajagaha there are two

gangs ' ... and they explained the whole matter.

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'What has been won and what is to be won, - both of these (ways) are dust-begrimed for the man diseased who follows them. Those who set chief value on training, who set chief value on the following after virtue, religious duties, a way of living, the Brahma-life... This is the one way.

Those who maintain, who hold this view: There's no harm in sensual desires - this is the other way.

These two ways make the charnel-fields to grow; the charnel-fields make views to grow. By not comprehending these two, some stick fast, others go beyond bounds. But as for those who, by fully comprehending them, have not been of that way of thinking, who have not prided themselves thereon, - for such as these there is no whirling round to be proclaimed."

S: As the footnote says, this is a rather obscure passage; the text as it stands is unintelligible. But we can make some sense of it in a general way. Let us start from something which seems as it were, obviously wrong:

'Those who set chief value on training, who set chief value on the following after virtue, religious duties, a way of living, the Brahma-life ... This is the one way.'

Then, later on, the Buddha says:

'These two ways make the charnel-fields to grow',

suggesting that both ways are wrong, including that first one - that is, of setting chief value on training, of following after virtue, religious duties, way of living, and the Brahma-life. So what does that all mean?

Subhuti: It looks as if what perhaps was intended by the first one was extreme asceticism - that he is pointing out the two extreme paths ...

S: But if you take the actual words, it is not an extreme asceticism that is being described. The description of the extreme asceticism is usually rather different from this. It may be that two different pairs [384] of opposites have got mixed up. So this is how I look at it. The opening sentence says:

'What has been won and what is to be won, - both of these ways are dust-begrimed.'

I think it's got to be interpreted in the light of that. You've got as it were two situations, one in which something has been attained in the present, and the other in which something is to be attained in the future. So you could say, therefore, that those who are following after virtue, religious duties, way of living, are those who are doing it for the sake of the future, that is for the sake of a future recompense in heaven. This is inadequate from the Buddhist point of view. So 'what has been won' - that is, pleasure here and now in this life - that is one extreme which is dust-begrimed. The other is following the conventionally religious life for the sake

of a future rebirth in heaven. This is the other extreme; this is also dust-begrimed. And analogous to these are the kindred extremes of self-torture and asceticism, because it is following the conventional religious path for the sake of future rebirth in heaven. This can be carried to extremes and can become self-mortification for the sake of rebirth in heaven.

The commentary explains it in a way rather the other way round, or makes the application the other way round - that is to say, it is the torment of asceticism which is present, and the torment of punishment, as it were, or retribution, for a sensual life in the present, which is future. So that is a different way of linking the present and the future. So there seems to be a bit of confusion, though the general point is pretty clear, that extremes are to be avoided, as it were.

One can put it in a still more general way and say that if one is thinking merely in terms of something conditioned, especially conditioned happiness, it does not really make much difference whether you have pleasure now and pain afterwards, or pain now and pleasure afterwards; it is still the same old round of samsara. What you have to do is to transcend both. So though the ascetics, who follow that extreme, have pain now and pleasure later, the sensualists have pleasure now and pain later on. So what is the difference really? Both ways only perpetuate the samsara, only 'make the charnel-fields to grow'; only feeds the grave, as we would say.

ABC: What does this last bit mean - 'there is no whirling round to be proclaimed'?

S: 'But as for those who, by fully comprehending them,' - that is, the two extremes - 'have not been of that way of thinking, who have not prided themselves thereon' - that is, prided themselves on either of these two extreme ways of thinking - 'for such as these there is no whirling round to be proclaimed.' Of these it cannot be said that they any longer go round and round in the samsara; in other words, they have won Nirvana.

Devaraja: What does 'others go beyond bounds' mean? 'Some stick fast, others go beyond bounds.'

S: Those who stick fast are the sensualists, presumably, who are sticking fast in the present, and those who go beyond bounds are the ascetics who [385] for the sake of future pleasures in heavenly worlds go beyond all bounds in their self-mortification in this life.

According to the commentary, the charnel-fields are taken as it were metaphorically to refer to craving and ignorance. This is a bit obscure, but that is what the commentary says. 'These two ways make the charnel-fields to grow; the charnel-fields make views to grow', in the sense of wrong views, false views.

Sagaramati: 'Charnel-fields' - is that a graveyard?

S: Burning ground, yes, or a place where dead bodies are merely thrown and left to rot or to be eaten by wild beasts.

So, if you take it in this sense, it is as though the wrong ways of life, the extreme courses which are followed, intensify craving and ignorance, and that intensified craving and ignorance give rise to a fresh crop of false views. In this way a vicious circle is created. You

could say, to put it more specifically, your wrong livelihood strengthens your wrong views, and on account of your wrong views you tend more and more to follow wrong livelihood. It is somewhat like that. In other words, your action strengthens your view and your view reinforces your actions. Because your wrong way of life confirms your basic ignorance and craving, and results in a fresh rationalization of what you are actually doing, in the form of a fresh version of a wrong view. So

'These two ways make the charnel-fields to grow; the charnel-fields make views to grow. By not comprehending these two, some stick fast, others go beyond bounds' ...

the two extremes. This can be looked at either specifically or generally; either you stick fast, you wallow in the extreme of self-indulgence, or you go beyond bounds in your asceticism.

I think a few general words can be said about these two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, perhaps translating them into more modern terms. They are the two extremes set forth by the Buddha, according to slightly later tradition, in what is called the First Discourse or First Utterance at Sarnath, the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification between which there was the Middle Way - in other words, the Middle Way which was the Eightfold Path.

Self-mortification is more like repression, almost in the Freudian sense: when you try violently (and, of course, in Freud's language, repression is always unconscious, and so unconsciously) to keep down what is negative in yourself, and you force it down, not to recognize it, not to look at it, not even to be aware of it, an unconscious process of forcibly keeping down. And, of course, the opposite, self-indulgence, is simply a constant pandering to neurotic cravings. So the Middle Way consists in neither as it were ignoring and keeping out of sight one's unskilful, even neurotic, side, nor giving it free rein and indulging it. It means not being repressive and not being permissive, you could say.

Obviously, we ourselves here, not only individually but as regards the Movement, have to be very careful to steer a middle way between these two extremes. It is quite difficult. When we explain things to people or put the Buddhist point of view or Buddhist principles, we have to be very careful that we don't create an impression of repressiveness, nor an impression of permissiveness as it were. Have you come across this [386] or encountered this sort of difficulty in achieving this rather fine balance? (Voices: Mm.) You don't want to say to people, 'Buddhism says you must do this or must do that,' and you don't want to say to people, 'Buddhism says anything goes, it's OK.' Perhaps it's best to be very general and say, 'Develop what is skilful; don't develop what is unskilful.' But it is very difficult for individuals, or those who are trying to be individuals, to follow this sort of Middle Way. Repression is very often associated with guilt, and self-indulgence is very often associated with neurotic needs. And both are associated, usually, with very heavy rationalization. But I think probably, as regards the sort of people that we are more likely to be in contact with, we have to be more careful of not going to the extreme of self-indulgence. This seems to be the current ethos in a place like London, anyway.

Devaraja: Yes, ... the predominant ...

S: A hedonistic extreme. But you don't want to counteract that by the repressive extreme. That is the danger and that is the difficulty. But a healthy Middle Way, a truly skilful Middle

Way.

Devaraja: The trouble is that one so quickly slips into the other, it seems. The more extreme the person is on one side, the more quickly they slip to the other.

S: Right.

ABC: You have to judge your attitudes. It is like walking a tightrope.

S: Being between the devil and the deep blue sea! But do you at the Centre come up nowadays much against the sort of hedonistic attitude?

Subhuti: Not as much as we used to. About a year ago I remember doing a course, and there were several people on it who had been into various forms of psychotherapy. And it was really difficult to convey the Precepts and what was implied by them. They just rejected any idea of doing anything unconscious or neurotic - the word 'neurotic' really annoyed people.

S: Good! In what way? Can you give more detail?

Subhuti: They felt that if you labelled something as neurotic, then you weren't giving it room to grow and develop and - (Laughter.)

S: Oh, that's the whole idea, yes. You label the bottle 'Poison' so that you shouldn't take it! (Laughter continuing.) Of course, one can always make a mistake, and one should be very careful not to label as neurotic something that is essentially, or at least potentially, quite healthy. But I am sure that they weren't being careful simply not to classify wrongly, but they objected to the very principle underlying the classification.

This seems to be the least positive side of this whole group therapy movement. It does seem very weakly self-indulgent and sort of feebly hedonistic. A real hedonist wouldn't waste his time with group therapy! It's almost the people who don't dare to be hedonistic and want an excuse. They don't say, 'I'm being hedonistic. I just want to enjoy myself,' [387] you know? - 'It's therapy. It's good for me. My therapist says I ought to do it, otherwise I'll get neurotic.' They haven't got really the conviction, or the courage, of their own hedonistic feelings. They want a sort of official excuse, a few lines from their medical man or their psychoanalyst saying, 'It's good for you to indulge in all these things, you need them.' It's just like medicine! It seems so dishonest, in a way. I'm sure that in some group therapy sessions, it is just a very decent, middle-class equivalent of a dirty weekend, really; it's almost like that, that's the impression you get. It's all respectable, it's under medical auspices, as it were, it's OK. I am quite sure that a lot of it is to do with a residue of guilt feeling. So you have to be taught it's all right, you can do it. The doctor says so. It's what the doctor ordered, in fact. Otherwise, why not just go off and do it? I'm afraid I become less and less appreciative of this whole group therapy trip - for want of a better term. Think of all the money you fork out for those weekends! In America, some of these people are absolutely making fortunes!

: And yes, they go for years to psychoanalysts, and they don't even seem to progress.

S: Well, you could even say that about people who are going along to Buddhism - that they ...

Devaraja: Well, I think within the Movement, people ...

S: Well, us, yes, give ourselves a little pat on the back - not too strongly, but ...

: Well, I must say there have been a lot of changes in the Movement.

S: I've seen a lot of change, too; not only change, improvement. Miracles! (Laughter.) Well, I've seen people getting on to the Middle Path you know, not just swapping from one extreme to the other; though I've seen that, too.

But this is one of the things you appreciate about ancient India. When they went in for self-mortification, they did it really heroically. It was heroic self-mortification. And when they were sensual and hedonistic, they were gloriously sensual and hedonistic, without any apologies or excuses at all! So you knew exactly where you stood. And the Buddha had these very two very clear-cut and strong extremes between which to make his Middle Way. But nowadays the ascetics are a bit apologetic about being ascetic and the hedonists are even more apologetic about being hedonists, and there are not even any decent extremes any longer.

: They are so halfhearted about it.

S: So halfhearted, yes. It is interesting to see them getting at each other. Lord Longford and Mary Whitehouse, you know, versus the porn dealers and so on. It all hangs together. I was talking in Finland to personal friends about this, about Lord Longford's visit to Denmark. It was regarded as a real joke there - his personal investigations into pornography. No doubt he is a very worthy person, but one wonders whether [388] he shouldn't look at his motivation. Like Gladstone going round helping fallen women. He seems to have been quite fascinated by them. So he had to go round helping them - late at night. And he did help them, but again the motivation needed to be examined. Extremes do tend to meet if you are not careful.

But the whole idea or principle of the Middle Way is very important. And for many people in the West, it is extremely difficult to get on to. They rather veer to one extreme or the other. Some people even feel guilty if they are happy, even quite skilfully happy. They feel as though they ought not to be happy, for some reason, that it's somewhat bad to be happy.

I remember that my mother had a friend whose father was a very strict Christian, and he brought all his daughters up to believe it was wrong to laugh on the sabbath. And I have been told, even within living memory, that people in Scotland have been rebuked by serious-minded elders for laughing on the sabbath. 'Don't you know what day it is?' they say if they hear someone laughing.

: In one of your lectures - I think it's 'Perfect Emotion' you said you believed there was a law, ... I don't know whether it's been abolished, but apparently you could be prosecuted for laughing on a Sunday.

S: Yes, it was sabbath-breaking.

Sagaramati: That's probably why they drink so much.

S: Yes, right.

: ... hedonistic ...

S: Yes. Provided you drink really seriously and greedily.

Sagaramati: ... quite happy!

S: Anyway, any general point about the Middle Way? There is quite a lot that could be said about the Middle Way, actually, but maybe we'd better not go into it now.

: Go on.

S: Well, there are different aspects of the Middle Way, different levels. There is the ethical Middle Way, the Middle Way between the two ethical extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Then there is what may be called the psychological Middle Way. Here the two extremes are the belief in the continued existence of the unchanging self beyond death, and the sudden annihilation of that unchanging self at death. Here the Middle Way is the continuity of the ever-changing process of cyclical existence. Then there is the metaphysical Middle Way, the Middle Way between the extremes of existence and non-existence, thinking in terms of absolute being and absolute non-being; and the Middle Way, of course, is relativity or conditioned co-production, a sort of network of conditions or factors arising in dependence upon other factors.

ABC: The metaphysical was the difference between absolute being and -

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S: - absolute non-being. Or thinking in terms exclusively of the one or of the other.

Devaraja: So the metaphysical Middle Way is conditioned co-production?

S: Yes. The world as a whole is neither absolutely existent nor absolutely non-existent. It represents a play of conditions, ever changing. That is the metaphysical Middle Way. So there are these three levels: the ethical, the psychological and the metaphysical. The Madhyamika school is, of course, more concerned with the third, the Middle Way in metaphysics.

: Is the doctrine of maya an example of absolute non-existence?

S: Do you mean the Vedantic doctrine or the Buddhist one?

: I think I'm thinking of the Vedantic one.

S: One could say, in a way, that that was an example of the Middle Way, because Sankara, at least, does say, that maya is not to be defined as existent or non-existent, but, in some inexplicable way, it is just there, even though not really existent, but at the same time not non-existent.

Sometimes the illustration is given, in Buddhist circles, of the reflection in the mirror. Suppose you have, say, a face reflected in a mirror - well, the face, one could say, is not in the

mirror; the face is not there in the mirror. You could regard it as not being existent in the mirror, because obviously it is only a reflection. On the other hand, there is something in the mirror, so you could say that there is something there in the mirror. But the truth of the matter is that neither is there a face there nor not a face there. What has happened is that there is a mirror, and there is a face, and in dependence upon those two factors arises the reflection, so there is conditionality: neither existence of the face nor non-existence of the face.

Devaraja: Neither existence nor non-existence of the reflection?

S: No, of the face. Because the original question - admittedly, wrongly put - is, is there a face in the mirror or is there not? In other words, it is conceived of being in that sort of exclusive way; which is wrong, but this is what happens. So there is neither a face in the mirror nor not a face in the mirror. There is a reflection, you could say, which has arisen in dependence upon the two factors of mirror and face.

: You can't follow the analogy along and say there is a real face of which this is a reflection?

S: No. All comparisons have their limits. Well, some might do that, and try to argue from the reflection to the real face and to an existent entity, but Buddhism would say that that would be disregarding the limits of the illustration itself, as regards its being an illustration of the Buddhist point of view. An illustration is not a proof; though there is, of course, disagreement about that point, too. Probably to some schools illustrations are proofs - the proof of analogy. But the Buddhist philosophical schools in India did not recognize analogies as proofs. Some other schools did. I am inclined to think the medieval Buddhists were [390] wrong, actually, but that is quite another story! The Buddha himself did not say anything about this very explicitly, but the medieval Buddhist philosophical schools, or rather the more epistemological and logical schools, were associated with the teaching that analogy was not an independent source of knowledge, not a *pramana* (?). But I am inclined to think that was rather a mistake. We might go into that when we go through Buddhist Thought in India some time. It is too big a question to go into now.

It is quite an interesting point - what makes one go to extremes? Has anyone got any thoughts on this?

Sagaramati: Being imbalanced.

S: Being unbalanced, yes. But that is another way of putting the same thing. Or maybe not; it is maybe the sort of static equivalent. You go to extremes because you are unbalanced.

ABC: To balance out.

S: To balance out. And you have to balance out because you are unbalanced. You never go to extremes, you always go to one extreme. And you go to one extreme from the other extreme, presumably.

: Isn't it a lot tied up with fear, reactions tied up with fear?

S: Maybe it's also conscious and unconscious. And compensation; as when you go to the extreme of confidence, you are over-confident in your conscious mind to compensate for

unconscious feelings of lack of confidence. If you are not quite sure of the truth of what you are saying, you shout as in the well-known anecdote of the Victorian preacher, who preached a very inspiring sermon, and someone was so interested that he went through his manuscript (because they used to write their sermons in those days and then preach from the manuscript), and he found that the clergyman had scribbled little notes in the margin as to how he should deliver the sermon, so in one part he had put: 'Argument weak. Shout here.'

Sagaramati: Or even unconsciously looking for the Middle Way.

S: Yes, maybe, looking unconsciously for the Middle Way, trying to right the balance. That is when you go to an extreme. But supposing you are stuck in an extreme at present. Why do you think you are sort of stuck in it and remain in it and don't get out of it? Or do you?

Devaraja: Speaking personally, I get stuck (and) I get pulled out of it by the other part that is stuck in the other extreme which is now unconscious.

S: Yes, quite. So one alternates between the two. In a sense, the two extremes are always there together, but only one can come up at any given time.

ABC: I find if I get to extremes I feel a bit afraid of letting go of the extremes.

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S: And going back, as it were?

ABC: Yes, going back to the other extreme.

S: Of course, there is the question of what is actually an extreme and what is simply just some other aspect of one's own nature, or maybe a number of such aspects. And if they are normal aspects, they are aspects which have certain healthy needs. They can start asserting themselves after a period of neglect. But certainly, in the Buddha's day, these two extremes are rather strange, even though so pronounced - the fact that people were into self-mortification so strongly, as in fact many Indians or many sadhus still are. We have hardly had that in the West - except perhaps in rather odd forms in the case of some Christian saints, but usually connected with very strong feelings of guilt and unworthiness and a need for self-punishment. That is probably a rather different thing.

Subhuti: This wasn't the case in India?

S: Apparently not, no.

Subhuti: So what was it in that case?

S: Well, they genuinely believed, apparently, that by these tremendous efforts they would be reborn in heaven. It was an exercise in will power, almost.

: Did you come across much of that ... ?

S: I can't say that I had close association with any people who were practising this very strenuously. But one encountered a general attitude, certainly among the Hindu public, a

general feeling of respect for those who went in for self-mortification. Yes, I did have some contact with a rather odd sort of figure - I have described him in my memoirs - he was Chinese, and supposedly a Buddhist, and he lived up a tree at Kusinara, and regularly he used to burn himself; and villagers used to come from round about - Hindu villagers; Buddhists didn't think very much of all this - but the Hindu villagers used to gather round very admiringly whenever he burned himself. He had burns all over his body. I met him and tried to talk to him, and he seemed a bit mad; only knew a little, very bad, Hindi. But he was highly regarded by local Hindus. And the Buddha once said, according to the Pali Canon, that the people respect self-mortification. But he wasn't himself very much in favour of it, even in a modified form. And Devadatta tried to get the Buddha to enforce certain more ascetic principles or practices, on the grounds that people had high regard for those who observed these practices.

: I think at some time it was suggested that what was admired was the power that someone would have to have to be able to do this.

S: Yes, the will power. Nietzsche makes this suggestion, by the way.

Devaraja: I read that, when Chinese become upasakas, they have this thing about burning a stick of incense ...

S: Yes, on the head, usually; sometimes on the arm. This, of course, [392] goes back to the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra. It is supposed to signify the Bodhisattva's willingness to suffer for other living beings. But some Chinese have taken this to extremes. Certainly in the Pali Canon you don't find the Buddha approving of these sort of practices at all. He did his best to discourage them. Even though some of his own disciples were quite keen on extra asceticism, beyond what the Buddha thought really necessary or helpful.

Devaraja: Didn't he permit certain ascetic practices, not because he thought they were conducive to Enlightenment but because people liked them so much?

S: Well, he did permit certain ascetic practices of the milder variety to satisfy the possibly slightly neurotic need of some people within the Order who wanted to engage in these practices; so he thought it better to lay down a few simple ones that they were permitted to do, and in this way sort of channel their craving for self-mortification. But they were relatively mild practices.

Some of these practices of self-mortification in the Buddha's time were more like a reversion to very primitive ways of life. For instance, some ascetics insisted on eating their food out of their hands, or eating like a dog and lapping water like a dog. That was called kukkuracara, the way of life like that of a dog. Some used to go on all fours and some again not wear clothes. It seemed to be a sort of rather odd primitivism in some cases.

: Wasn't one of the siddhas called Kukkuripada? Is that related to that?

S: No, according to iconography, he is called Kukkuripada because he kept a dog with him and he is depicted with a dog. And you remember the Cynics of ancient Greece, who had some connection with India, it seems; cynics, you know, is a word meaning dog; the Cynics were the dogs. They believed in going naked and performing natural functions in public just

like dogs, and copulating in public just like dogs.

So the term self-mortification, so far as ancient India is concerned, covered a very wide range of practices with, perhaps, several different motivations.

Anyway, perhaps the subject in this form is not really very relevant. But people do tend to go to extremes, this we know. We have to be careful to keep to the Middle Way which is balanced and sane and healthy and wholesome and skilful.

ABC: Well, that's quite a necessity.

S: Yes... asceticism. And also there is the Middle Way in the sense of the balancing of the opposite factors of faith and understanding, and meditation and action - that is very important - and both pairs to be balanced with the aid of mindfulness. There is a Middle Way between being either too emotional or too intellectual, or too introvert or too extravert. One can look at the pairs of opposites like that. Though there is probably a difference between pairs of factors which are opposites and pairs of factors which are complementary. In the case of the pairs of opposites, you don't really want either, and in the case of the complementaries you want both.

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Sagaramati: Would it be right to say that they're not really opposites, in that case? You avoid the opposites.

S: You avoid the opposites?

Sagaramati: With the complementaries, you actually as it were partake in the one and then ...

S: You cultivate them both and try to blend and harmonize and integrate them.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anāpindika's Park.

On that occasion the Exalted One was seated in the open air, on a night of inky darkness, and oil-lamps were burning.

And at that time swarms of winged insects kept falling into those oil-lamps and thereby met their end, came to destruction and utter ruin. And the Exalted One saw those swarms of winged insects so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

They hasten up and past, but miss the real; A bondage ever new they cause to grow. Just as the flutterers fall into the lamp, So some are bent on what they see and hear."

S: This little episode describes what is still quite a familiar scene in India. It is night-time and the little oil lamps have been lit, and as soon as they have been lit, very often, swarms of insects come rushing in, fluttering in from all directions, especially a sort of winged ant, and many of them fall into the flames. You see them sort of whizzing past. They seem to take a dive in the direction of the flame, sometimes just missing it, sometimes landing right in, sometimes just singeing their wings and sometimes getting really badly burned. So the udana

represents the Buddha's reflection, as it were, upon this little scene. He is obviously thinking that those insects behave just like human beings. So he is quite deeply stirred by this reflection, and utters the udana.

It seems, though, that there are two quite different comparisons in this one udana. Do you see that? The light of the lamp is compared to two quite different things in the first two lines and in the second two lines. Do you notice this? What is it compared to in the first two lines?

: The Real.

S: Yes, it is compared to the Real. What is it compared to in the second?

: The Samsara.

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S: The samsara. So there is a twofold comparison, though perhaps they are related; maybe we shall see that in a minute. In the first place, the light of the oil lamp is compared to the Real. Light is a very common symbol for the Real. So in this case, in these two lines, what do you think the little episode means? How are the winged insects behaving, or in what way are the human beings, to which the Buddha is implicitly comparing the winged insects, behaving?

: Buzzing up to it and missing it.

S: Buzzing up to it and missing it. Human beings are, as it were, attracted by the Real, but they just miss it every time, as it were; some of them, anyway.

'They hasten up and past, but miss the real; A bondage ever new they cause to grow.'

So they find the Real, as it were, very attractive. There is something that draws them, maybe they don't know quite what it is, or why they are drawn. But at the same time, they miss. Instead of diving right into the real, just at the last minute they swerve, they deflect, and they miss it, they go right past it. Obviously there are many examples of this sort of thing which occur to one. You can say, carrying the comparison a little further, that what attracts you is the Light; the light attracts you from a distance. But as you get nearer, you start feeling the warmth, you start feeling the heat. It starts becoming uncomfortable. And then you swerve when the heat gets too much to bear. So the light attracts, but the heat repels, almost. So when you see the light burning in the distance, it looks very beautiful, very pretty; when you see all these people treading the spiritual path, you hear all about Nirvana, all about Enlightenment, it seems really lovely! As you get into it, a bit nearer, it starts becoming uncomfortably warm. You start feeling a bit burned up, a bit singed, a bit in danger that you may be burned up completely, destroyed, annihilated. And then, at the last minute, practically, you make a sudden swerve and you pass right by. This is the sort of situation that the first two lines of the udana envisage: people initially attracted to the Real, but missing the Real in the end. And in this way 'A bondage ever new they cause to grow'; the same old pattern goes on repeating itself, over and over again.

And then a quite different comparison. The Buddha says,

'Just as the flutterers fall into the lamp, So some are bent on what they see and hear',

completely captivated by what they see and hear. So what comes to them comes into them through their ordinary, unenlightened senses; they are completely captivated by that, so they fall into the fire - not in a positive, purifying way but in a very negative way. In other words, they become involved in suffering; they bring about their own suffering.

Do you notice the significance of the phrase? It is not simply that people see and hear, but they are 'bent' on what they see and hear. It is not just objective, aware seeing and hearing. There is attachment to seeing and hearing, attachment to the things that you think you see and hear; attachment to the particular way in which you interpret your experience. 'So some are bent on what they see and hear.' There is no harm [395] in seeing and hearing. That is perfectly all right; there is nothing wrong with the senses. But it is being 'bent' on what you see and hear, attached to it, hankering after it, which causes all the trouble.

'They hasten up and past, but miss the real; A bondage ever new they cause to grow. Just as the flutterers fall into the lamp, So some are bent on what they see and hear.'

Any query on that? Quite a short episode, but quite significant. (Silence.)

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now the venerable Ananda came to the Exalted One ... and said this:

'Sir, so long as Wayfarers arise not in the world, who are arahants, rightly awakened ones, the Wanderers holding other views are esteemed, honoured, thought much of and worshipped, have deference paid to them and get supplies of robes and alms-food, bed and seat, comforts and medicines for sickness. But, sir, when Wayfarers arise in the world, arahants, rightly awakened ones, then the Wanderers holding other views are [396] no longer esteemed, no longer honoured and so forth. So now, sir, the Exalted One is esteemed, honoured ... and so forth. So also is the order of monks.'

'So it is, Ananda! So long as Wayfarers arise not in the world (these things happen)... But when a Wayfarer arises ... these things cease. So now the Wayfarer is esteemed, honoured ... and so also is the order of monks.'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'That glow-worm shines so long as the light-bringer has not arisen. But when the shining one has come up, its light is quenched, it glows no longer. Such is the shining of the sectarians. So long as the rightly awakened ones arise not in the world, the sophists get no light, nor do their followers, and those of wrong views cannot be released from ill.'

S: Who is 'the light-bringer', then?

Voices: The sun.

S: The sun. So the Buddha and his teaching, by implication, are compared with the sun, compared to the greater light; and the one-sided teachings or one-sided views, like the limited perceptions of the blind men in the parable of the blind men and the elephant, are compared

to the shining of the glow-worm. In other words, all partial visions are swallowed up in the total vision, or the lesser lights in the greatest light. But the glow-worms have their day, so long as there is no light, so long as it's dark, so long as the sun has not risen - then the glow-worms may look even quite bright and beautiful. But when the sun rises, they are just nowhere at all.

: What does 'sophists' mean?

S: Sophist - there is a footnote here, isn't there? Takkika; takkika means literally 'mere reasoners', those who speculate or reason from, or draw conclusions from, limited experience, just like the blind men in the parable. Sometimes it is translated as 'logicians', and takka or tharika, in later Indian thought, does mean logic. But here, in this more general sense, it means those who reason from a very limited range of experience, try to arrive at general conclusions from limited experience; even universal conclusions from limited experience.

Devaraja: Is that the meaning of sophistry in English in general?

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S: No, generally sophistry means sort of false reasoning; a reasoning which is plausible but which is basically unsound, not in accordance with the rules of correct reasoning. Originally, of course, a sophist in ancient Greece was simply a wise man, or one who professed to be wise, but the sophists, fortunately or unfortunately, got a bad name through Plato; it was not a pejorative term originally. Protagoras was a sophist; Parmenides was a sophist, and so on. They were wise men, they went about teaching their wisdom. Aristophanes classifies Socrates with the Sophists and satirizes him in *The Clouds*, but Plato sharply distinguishes him from them. So when Plato uses the term, he uses it quite ironically, and it is in that sense it has been used ever since. Sophos is wise; sophia is wisdom. So Plato regarded the so-called wise men as not being truly wise; so Sophists therefore acquired the meaning of one who pretended to be wise, without really being wise; one who imposed upon you as being wise by trickery and eloquence, and reasoning whose fallaciousness you were unable to detect.

So there were various teachers in ancient India around the Buddha's time who are referred to in the English translations and English works as sophists and so on. But various terms are used in the Pali texts to refer to them; takkika is one - the reasoners, it literally means, as I explained - those who reason from inadequate evidence or a limited range of experience. You could even say mere rationalists. And then another very common term is lokayatika. Loka is the world. It means those belonging to the world, as it were, or those pertaining to the world; or those speaking about the world, even. No one really knows what exactly that meant, but it means roughly those who hold general views about the world, general views about the nature of existence, especially of a more materialistic and as it were proto-scientific type. Lokayatikas are mentioned quite often in the *Lankavatara Sutra*.

Another term is tirthiyas or tirtikas. A tirta is a ford, that is to say, a place where the river is a bit shallow and where you can get across. So a tirthankara or tirthakara is a ford-maker, one who makes a ford, or professes to make a ford, or tries to make a ford, across the river, i.e. the river of samsara, therefore a sort of saviour or guide who tries to help you across. But in this instance, it means one who is not really able to do that, who merely attempts it unsuccessfully.

: Tirthikas - wasn't that the name applied to most of the Jains?

S: Yes, they are called tirthankaras. Of course, in their own eyes, they do succeed in making the ford, making the crossing place. So they use the term in a positive sense, a non-pejorative sense. But in the Pali and Sanskrit texts it always has a pejorative sense. The Buddha is never called Tirthankara. The Tirthakaras are those who merely attempt to make fords but don't really succeed, or who claim to have made a ford without actually having made one.

Devaraja: You say a materialist would be related to that? Is that another sense?

S: No, I said that lokayatika is sometimes translated by 'materialist', although this is too narrow, really; a materialist is just one particular kind of lokayatika.

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Devaraja: Because wasn't the Jain tradition quite a nihilistic tradition?

S: No, not metaphysically. It was ethically one-sided from the Buddhist point of view, but it wasn't metaphysically nihilistic. They believed in a multiplicity of liberated purushas who purged themselves of karma - karma being conceived of as a semi-material substance which adhered to the purusha and had to be purged off by extreme penance. But they believed that once that karma had been purged off, what was left was the liberated purusha as an actually existent entity, different from all other such entities similarly liberated. That was the Jain view. It was metaphysically rather naive and realistic, one might say, but not nihilistic in a metaphysical sense. If anything, it was eternalistic.

Anyway, what the Buddha is saying here essentially is that there are many partial views, views based upon limited experience, one-sided views, and that these are current and popular and able to circulate only so long as a complete and total Truth has not yet been discovered, has not yet arisen. This is in a way what one finds today in the West: there are all sorts of little fashions in thought, which are current for a while and then disappear, all sorts of trends, all sorts of fashions. It is really strange, in a way, if one reflects that this is a quite possibly abnormal situation. If you go back, for instance, to the days of ancient Egypt, what did you find there? You found one philosophy; you found one way of life; practically one religion, though in the religious sphere there were some changes and differences, as between one part of Egypt and another - but only really differences of detail, from our point of view. So there was no confusion of thought, no conflict of thought; maybe a certain rivalry between certain great temples, but nothing more than that, just one wisdom existing at different levels. We can't imagine that, a completely unified civilization; that is what the civilization of ancient Egypt was, virtually.

Devaraja: To what extent does modern Western society echo Indian society (at the time of) the Buddha with all these trends and fashions?

S: It does echo it very considerably. The comparison has often been made. But probably now it is even more of a mess than it was then. Therefore, we find that from time to time we come into contact - not to say conflict - with various micchaditthis, but it is interesting that these are exposed as micchaditthis only when we are really trying to follow the Path, or to make clear what the following of the Path involves. In other words, a micchaditthi is seen as a micchaditthi only in the light of the Truth, or at least of a higher truth. In other words, you

only see the glow-worms as glow-worms when the sun rises, when there is some standard of comparison, as it were. Until then, you may just be tossed, as it were, from one view to another, fetching up the latest and most fashionable micchaditthi.

Devaraja: And often holding irreconcilable micchaditthis at the same time.

S: Oh, yes! After all, you don't want to limit yourself! I mean, one doesn't want to be too personal, but there are all sorts of odd teachers around; that is to say, people spreading or encouraging or holding certain very one-sided views. So again in that respect it is very much as it was in the Buddha's day. It seems as though this sort of disintegration, even in a sense religious disintegration, this proliferation of views - right views, wrong views, views somewhere in between - comes about when [399] what we may describe, for want of a better term, as a unified civilization or unified culture is in process of collapse. Whatever unity there was in Europe was provided by Christianity; it was a Christian philosophy that was accepted by all. It was a Christian way of life that was followed by all, at least in theory, at least in principle. But it is that which has disintegrated; you know, God is dead. So Christianity can no longer act as a sort of cohesive principle for Western civilization and Western culture. It did so act for some time. So all sorts of views, speculations, philosophies, religions and so on are springing up in the wake of the disintegration of Christianity; and, of course, in some parts of the Western world Marxism has taken over and forms a sort of principle of cohesion of civilization and culture, of a very limited order. Otherwhere, one might say a vague sort of secularism has taken over. In some parts of the Western world, of course, the church, especially the Catholic church, does retain some vestige of its original influence, but it seems to be weakening all the time.

Devaraja: It is a bit like Rome, too ...

S: It is a bit like Rome; except that Rome did not have much in the way of a unifying principle of a more spiritual nature. The nearest it got to producing that was in Stoicism, which was not entirely of Roman origin, anyway; it was simply adopted, more or less - the old Roman conception of duty.

So we may say - and I have said this several times recently; I think it is very true - that much that we think of as new thought, new ideas, are simply symptoms of the disintegration of the old, or symptoms that the old has disintegrated or at least is in process of disintegration. So it becomes more and more important to find, for the Western world, for Western civilization and Western culture, a new unifying principle, which really means virtually a new Western civilization and a new Western culture. It seems to me that this can only come from something very much resembling Buddhism - though it won't be Eastern Buddhism exactly - in alliance with the more positive non-Christian trends in the pre-existing Western civilization and culture.

Devaraja: It's quite strange how one sees these quite desperate attempts to revive this unifying spiritual principle. I think that a lot of the attention paid to Glastonbury is an example; it is a desperate attempt to revive something which is past and cannot be revived. It all seems to have a quite hollow ring about it.

S: Yes, right. One can certainly connect up with whatever in the past is positive and still living, but one can't revive what is dead. And when you think there are so many movements

around nowadays, so many trends of thought - there are hundreds, if not thousands, of them; but they don't really add up to much. This means that it is most difficult for the ordinary man in the street; the ordinary man does not want to have to think things out. He doesn't want to have to bother too much with religion and philosophy and all that. He just wants to follow an established pattern and to be able to believe in the civilization and culture in the midst of which he finds himself. And this is best for most people that they should be born into a healthy and positive civilization and culture, where all the thinking, as it were, has already been done: certainly, where all the creative thinking has already been done.

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Devaraja: Do you think this accounts for a lot of the neurotic craving of people?

S: I think it accounts for a lot of basic insecurity. I think things have changed very rapidly, or rather perhaps the process of disintegration has accelerated considerably, even over the last 20, 30 or 40 years. I was looking the other day into a few old books - even books published in the 30s seem very out of date; very different from our experience today. In books published even in the 30s in this country, you get references to the British Empire; references to Britain as the most powerful country in the world and the greatest empire that ever was. But all that has gone, or most of that has gone; at least, much of that has gone. And if you go back 100 years, practically everybody took the truth of Christianity absolutely for granted, whether or not they actually practised it, but that is no longer by any means the case. And there was a certain cultural uniformity all over Europe for hundreds of years, at least among the upper classes, but now that is no longer so.

ABC: It seems to suggest that (it is less that) periods of disintegration have fallen that (that) the truth has come up.

S: Yes, periods of disintegration do have their value. It means a breaking up of the old. But they are intensely uncomfortable periods for practically everybody.

Devaraja: I wonder to what extent we feel this disintegration, say, much more than it is felt in a place like New Zealand. I was thinking of your comments about (people there being) much less neurotic than people (here).

S: I haven't thought about this, but it may well be that it doesn't affect New Zealand so much as it affects this country. But what bearing, exactly, that has upon their apparently less neurotic condition and our apparently more neurotic condition, I just wouldn't like to say. But one might say that the average man needs to have a sort of generally recognized philosophy, a generally recognized way of life; that it is very difficult for him to sort it all out for himself. And probably we do not always realize the extent to which the old certainties have disintegrated and the extent to which we are living in a sort of interregnum between one civilization and another. This is actually the position. As Matthew Arnold says:

'between two worlds - one dead, The other powerless to be born.'

Maybe it isn't powerless to be born, but it hasn't actually been born yet.

Of course, even in the East, one could say that the traditional cultures in many areas are in process of disintegration or have disintegrated already. It seems a general phenomenon, but it

has attacked Europe first. Europe is where the rot first set in - if it is in fact a rot. From certain points of view, it is, but we hope not ultimately a rot; or at least only a rot in the sense that vegetation rots to produce mould, which can then be a useful fertiliser.

But sometimes I feel that what is needed is a completely new start, virtually; and in this country, of course, it is quite difficult to make a completely new start, because we have so much history and tradition; [401] we are quite lumbered with them. Whereas I had the feeling in New Zealand that you could make a fresh start there; you could have a new civilization and a new culture. I had this feeling very strongly - that a few thousand Buddhists could make a difference to the whole country; and a few thousand Buddhists there - I mean real Buddhists, if not all Order Members at least mainly Mitras - is not an impossibility within the next 15 or 20 years. But it would be very difficult to do anything like that in this country.

Devaraja: Easier also in a place like Finland.

S: Probably, yes. Though I wouldn't like to ... I am pretty certain about New Zealand. But in England there is so much that you have just got to throw away, and you don't like to throw it away, for sentimental reasons.

Devaraja: Remember the wrangling over ... historic buildings as an example of that.

S: I must say, I feel personally very sympathetic to the past; I like old buildings, I like old bookshops and all the rest of it. But I sometimes think that maybe this is a typically English weakness.

ABC: Well, it's not really, compared to what goes up in its place.

S: But perhaps also we can't fully put our energy into the new, because it is still tied up with the old. It is still invested in the old, which is not, for us, really alive. If you are still hankering after little thatched cottages and all that sort of thing, you can't really put your heart into skyscrapers - assuming that skyscrapers really need to be built. In America, you get beautiful skyscrapers; in this country you just get architectural abortions. The skyscrapers of New York look really grand, because the people who put them up apparently believed in skyscrapers and liked skyscrapers. They really seem to fit there, they look quite impressive. But those that are dotted about London are halfhearted things and completely out of place anyway. We can't make up our minds whether to have them or not to have them.

What all this underlines is that it isn't enough just to have a path of individual spiritual development. It isn't even enough to have a sort of spiritual philosophy. It isn't enough to have even a spiritual community or fellowship. What you need also is a new civilization and a new culture, which is a much bigger and a much more complex thing. This is why I sometimes say that potentially the Friends have got these four things to offer. First of all, the path of individual spiritual development, that is to say individual spiritual development through meditation in its various forms, at its various levels; communication exercises, artistic creativity, and last but not least, organizational work. Then, secondly, there is the spiritual philosophy; the spiritual philosophy which is the Dharma, especially as interpreted in more contemporary terms, in terms of the Higher Evolution of Man. And thirdly, there is the fellowship; first of all, of a rather tribal nature, as it were, on the level of the Friends, and then as a spiritual community on a somewhat higher level, and the two interacting and stimulating

each other. But, fourthly, you also need at least the blueprint, at least the main principles, the basic principles, of a whole new civilization, culture, collective way of life and so on.

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: How do you see that developing?

S: Well, bit by bit and piece by piece; not in any grandiose way, but by a process of natural growth. I think first of all the emphasis must be on No. 1: personal spiritual development. The emphasis must be on that but, of course, it mustn't be confined to that. I certainly don't believe that, if you get on with your own spiritual development, everything will be all right. No. If one thinks in those terms, it is much too narrow, especially if one thinks of individual spiritual development in purely personal terms. But certainly it starts there, and must start there, and can only start there.

Then there is the sort of spiritual philosophy: you understand why you are making that effort, why it is that you are trying to develop, trying to grow, or why you should, even; what makes it possible and what it means in the widest sense. You see how it all fits in. In other words, you understand the Dharma, or what is traditionally called the Dharma; and translated into more contemporary terms that becomes the philosophy, as it were, of the Higher Evolution of Man. So one can present that spiritual philosophy either in traditional terms as the Dharma, or in more contemporary terms as the teaching of the Higher Evolution of Man; so one has the Dharma, the philosophy, the Teaching. Then, thirdly, one has the spiritual community; the spiritual community being the community of individuals who are committed to their own personal growth and development.

So what one can do is, first of all, do one's best to develop individually, spiritually; clarify one's understanding of the Dharma, the philosophy, in both its traditional and its contemporary forms; and strengthen the spiritual community of which, as one committed to one's own individual development, one finds that one is a member. Then also strengthen and make more and more healthy and widespread the as it were tribal community which is the worldly basis of the spiritual community, or the organism through which the spiritual community functions in the world. And then sort of implement one's blueprint for a new civilization and a new culture by taking up one by one certain projects connected with certain important aspects of life, and gradually extending them. I have been mentioning a few lately, like, for instance, organic farming: some Order Members and Friends getting together and being responsible for producing food for the Movement as a whole; and then printing and publishing; creating work for people within the Movement. And so, gradually, you develop until you've got a sort of community of your own, with many ramifications, carrying on all sorts of activities, but with the same basic principle running through everything. So, in a way, you gradually become practically a little state within a state, as far as you can; and one provides a small-scale model for an ideal society. But I think it is important that one does this as unobtrusively as possible, attracting the least attention. I don't think in this country these things can be furthered by directly political means, for instance. I think that would probably be self-defeating. The fewer people who know about the Movement, in a way, the better, apart from those who are directly involved with it and actually participating in it. One wants a situation where things develop and grow, and by the time people at large get to know what is happening it is too late to do anything about it. This is what is meant by a truly underground movement. But if you try to have an underground movement and you start off by having lots of publicity and lots of adverse comment and lots of people against you, then you don't really

ever manage to get started. It [403] seems ridiculous to attract this wrong sort of attention.

That is the general outline of these four main things. We have done quite a lot of work on the first, quite a bit on the second, quite a bit on the third, but practically nothing on the fourth; and the fourth is potentially the biggest, most demanding and most extensive, and for other people the most important. And then we have to start linking up with other areas of thought; maybe salvaging whatever we can that is positive from Christianity, sorting all that out - what shall we keep and what shall we throw away? And maybe studying people like Goethe and Blake, and finding out what there is in them which is compatible with what we are trying to do, what we think, what we believe, what we practise. Not throwing away everything; not throwing away the babies with the bathwater. It is quite important if we can get contact with some indigenous roots; this is also helpful, not just because they are indigenous, but because they do represent aspects of the Truth.

Subhuti: Leaving aside the very one-sided rational approach, do you think it's worth approaching Plato from this point of view as well?

S: I don't know. I have very mixed feelings about Plato, especially the later Plato. The earlier Plato, that is the Plato of the Symposium, for instance, might be helpful.

Subhuti: I'm just thinking of the Republic in terms of these ideals, including laying out the basic principles for a new society.

S: I don't really think one can work out a completely detailed blueprint in advance, as Plato tried to do. I think it must be a process of, not exactly natural growth - it's more than that - but certainly a process of aware growth. One has a general feeling of what one wants to do, or what needs to be done, objectively, but when one just keeps in mind these general principles, one tries to practise them and apply them, and as circumstances give you an opportunity you just move in, move into that area as it were. Not that you have a complete blueprint that you then try to put into operation by brute force, as it were. The only way you can do that is by political take-over. I don't think that that really works from the spiritual point of view - even if you could succeed.

Devaraja: It is a simple matter of rather like water filling a hole ...

S: Right, yes. And there are plenty of holes around. Just make sure that you have the water to fill them. But it means that one must be always alert, always on the lookout, always sensitive, always responsive; not stiff, not rigid, and certainly not blind.

So we have made a reasonably good start, on a small scale, with the first three of the things I have mentioned, but we haven't yet really made even a small start on the fourth. That will take us much longer; and there is no end to that.

Anyway, we have gone quite a long way from the Udana, in a sense, but never mind. This is quite important generally.

: Do you think that the traditional culture in India at that time was in process of break-up?

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S: Er - yes. Buddhism came rather at the tail end. On the religious side, the Vedic tradition was breaking up. People seemed to have lost faith in elaborate sacrifices and in the Vedic deities. And on the political side, the old tribal life was breaking up and bigger and bigger political units were coming into existence, of a monarchical nature. And eventually, of course, an Indian empire came into existence, which was the Magadhan empire. And there was a new spirit of rationalism, very much as there was in Greece, (whereby) rationalistic minded people attacked many of the old beliefs and customs and observances. So that the Buddha, in a sense, came along and sort of salvaged what he could and incorporated it into his new vision, or at least used it as a means of communication with people. There was a very definite sort of parallelism between what happened in ancient Greece and what happened in ancient India, at around the same time. In ancient Greece you had the break-up of the old tribal communities, the archaic Greek civilization, the pre-classical civilization; traditional observances were very much under attack. You see this if you look at the sequence of the great Greek tragedy writers from Aeschylus to Sophocles to Euripides. There is only a couple of generations between them, but the outlook of Euripides is completely different from that of Aeschylus. Euripides is practically a rationalist, he has no respect, no reverence for the gods, except perhaps as personifications of natural forces; but not the gods as the gods. His standpoint is more humanistic and rationalistic; whereas you don't get that in Aeschylus at all. That is only 50 or 60 years' difference. Much the same thing was happening in India.

Socrates and Plato tried to do what the Buddha succeeded in doing. The Buddha stated individual spiritual values, and succeeded in forming a spiritual community. But Socrates and Plato could not quite do that. They certainly produced between them something very great. I say 'they' because we don't really know where Socrates ends and Plato begins, because we know Socrates mainly through Plato's Dialogues; we are not quite sure, always, how much of the thought is Socrates's and how much is Plato's. But you have these early pre-Socratic philosophers, corresponding to the tirthakas of the Buddha's day, and they had their great battle with Socrates - or rather he had with them. He in a way cleared the way for Plato, who was a more constructive philosophic genius. And Plato, of course, even tried to establish an ideal state in Sicily, with the help of the tyrant or king Dionysius, but did not succeed, and had to leave in a hurry.

Devaraja: The way you put this helps me to understand much more clearly why the Buddha used such terms as Ariyan and sramana and brahmana.

S: Yes. Politically, also, Greece was undergoing the same sort of changes as India was. Eventually, first Philip of Macedon and then Alexander the Great unified the whole of the Greek-speaking world in a single empire. This is what Ajatasatru was doing in northern India towards the end of the Buddha's life, and that work culminated in the empire of Asoka three generations later. And it is also quite interesting that Asoka's grandfather, Chandragupta Maurya, was in correspondence or in connection with Agasthenes, the ambassador of Alexander the Great. Agasthenes came to the court of Chandragupta at Pataliputra, that is to say the present-day Patna, and Agasthenes left an account of the court of Chandragupta. We also know quite a bit about the organization of the empire in those days through Kaltilia's (?) Arthashastra, which belongs to that period, which is a complete manual of statecraft as practised in the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. So there was a certain amount of interconnection.

Another fact that is not generally known is that one of Asoka's grandmothers was a Greek Seleucid princess, so that Asoka was one quarter Greek. So you get these two empires overlapping. Another symptom or manifestation of that is the Milinda-panha. Milinda was a Greek king, you know, a ruler of one of the states remaining from the break-up of the Hellenic empire of Alexander the Great, and he has a long discussion with Nagasena; so you get as it were the Western and the Eastern coming together. That is quite important. But nothing much came of it, unfortunately.

Devaraja: What records are there? You mentioned Asoka sending missionaries to Alexandria; where is that recorded?

S: Well, Asoka set up inscriptions on columns and on rocks, what are called the Rock Edicts. In one of these he describes the services he had rendered to the Dharma, and among these services he enumerates the sending forth of Dharma missionaries. There is a great deal of discussion as to what this term actually means. I don't think he says 'dharmadutas', but some other expression which I can't remember. But certainly he sent envoys of some kind - and they appear to have been religious envoys to a number of rulers whose names he mentions in the rock Edicts. He sent, for instance, to Alexandria, to Ptolemy - there is a whole series of Ptolemies; you probably know that Alexander the Great's empire split up into three great sections, one of which was the Egyptian, which was governed by one of his generals, Ptolemy, from whom the Ptolemy line was descended. I think it was about the second or third in this line to whom Asoka sent a messenger. And then King Antigonos of, I think, Syria - I forget what Syria was called in those days. In this way he sent envoys to a number of neighbouring kings outside India. And there is a great deal of speculation as to whether the envoys whom he sent were in fact Buddhist monks, and whether they exerted any influence on the thought of the areas to which they were sent. There is a very strong suspicion - though it is no more than a suspicion - that there is a Buddhistic influence on the origins of Neoplatonism, but we don't really know. We do know that there were Buddhist monks in Alexandria. Several Greek writers of that period refer to sramanas and brahmanas - srahmanoi and brachmanoi - as being present in Alexandria. And the teacher of Plotinus, the greatest of the Neoplatonists, was Ammonius Saccas, who was also the teacher of Origen; and, according to some scholars, Saccas is Sakya - he was a Buddhist. But we don't know; this is just speculation. But there are all sorts of very intriguing possibilities. We know there was a great deal of coming and going in the world in those days.

But the reason that intercourse between East and West was cut off was, according to most sources, the rise of the Persian empire, which thrust a sort of wedge between India to the east and Rome to the west. The religion of this rather aggressive Persian empire was a sort of revivalist form of Zoroastrianism, very narrow and intolerant; and it was, of course, the followers of that religion, especially the king of those days in Persia, that finished off Mani and persecuted his religion, Manicheism, which spread on both sides and was influenced by both sides, both the West and the East.

Anyway, this is digressing considerably; this just opens a few historical vistas.

I mentioned Asoka's pillars. These pillars are polished and they have animals on the tops; but where did this come from? You never had [406] polished pillars in India before the time of Asoka. They are polished just like glass; so where did they come from?

: Greece?

S: They came from Persia. It is generally agreed now that they were modelled upon the pillars of the great palace at Persepolis, and that it is practically certain that Asoka imported Persian artisans to produce these pillars for him. And the capitals are very similar to those of the columns in the palace at Persepolis. So it is a quite interesting speculation what would have happened, what would have developed, had there been freer and longer intercourse between the Mauryan empire and the Roman empire. But, fortunately or unfortunately, Christianity arose and overran the Roman empire, and that was that; though Eastern influences continued to be felt, though in a rather subterranean manner. Anyway, how did we get into all that?

: The Sophists.

S: The Sophists, yes. The world is full of sophists of various kinds now. I can't help thinking that people like Marcuse and the author of *Life against Death* - Brown - this is much more the case in America than here; in America you really have got these sophists travelling around from one university campus to another, and they've got considerable followings. Another one - I went to hear him - what is his name? It begins with an F - well-known in connection with architecture, the geodesic dome ...

Voices: Buckminster Fuller.

S: Buckminster Fuller. I also heard Norman O. Brown, I went to listen to him and I was very disappointed. He just read something in an absolutely oracular style and manner. There were no questions, no discussion, everyone just went away afterwards. The oracle had spoken. And Buckminster Fuller spoke uninterruptedly without notes, with tremendous vigour, for two hours; and then, also, everyone just went away, that was that. Another oracle had spoken. And they go round from campus to campus. Though I think this is rather on the wane now. Alan Watts was another, and Baba Ram Dass is another. Leary was. So these are contemporary sophists, one may say.

Sagaramati: Is that in the derogatory sense of the term?

S: I'm afraid so. It's quite interesting, the ferment which is going on. It is very interesting. There are some aspects of it which are very positive.

Devaraja: In a way, they can't ever succeed for any length of time, because they haven't got a really cohesive and all-embracing teaching.

S: I must say that in England we have no cause for running down the Americans; our sophists are of a much lower calibre. Ours are like Malcolm Muggeridge! (Laughter.) We get our sophists on - what is that weekly programme? - 'Any Questions?' We get our sophists and pundits on that. We don't really have any very eminent ones, they are very minor figures [407] indeed. But it is all symptomatic. You wouldn't have had this before. You wouldn't have had it 100 years ago.

Devaraja: There is one English historian who is a ...

: Taylor.

Devaraja: A.J.P. Taylor, yes. He's a better one.

S: Right, yes.

: Gets that sort of treatment.

S: And A.J. Ayer, the logician. But they are not full-blown sophists, like the American ones are.

ABC: R.D. Laing.

S: Laing, yes, Laing is a very good example; though I must say there is a certain amount of genuineness in him. And he has recently become interested in Buddhism and Buddhist meditation, though I don't know how far he got with it - or whether he hasn't even dropped it.

: Not very far, I think. I went to a talk he gave at Caxton Hall. He was very negative about meditation in general. He just rambled on for about an hour and said nothing really at all. The general atmosphere was really unpleasant, in fact ...

S: And how many people went to hear him?

: A good crowd.

S: Any one of you probably could have given a better talk than Laing on Buddhist meditation, but how many people would go to hear any of you? Maybe you'd get 30 or 40, even 50 or 60, but not more than that.

: They didn't go to hear the lecture on meditation, they went to see Laing.

Devaraja: Well, maybe there's a call for having, say, at least one or two sensational figures - just on the basis that they will draw a ...

S: Are you volunteering?

Devaraja: No, I'm not! But maybe there's a ...

S: You have to be born a sensational figure. It's difficult to become one. Well, you could go into training. I think you've got the elements. (Devaraja laughs.)

: ... groom sensational figures like they groom pop stars, you know: through the media and so on. You need a good manager.

S: Right. And then, of course, you've got the professionally religious sophists, people like Guru Maharaj and so on.

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But there is a very definite and very interesting parallel between the world of those days - the world of the breakdown of the comparatively primitive tribal Indian society - and the breakdown of the comparatively simple Greek tribal society. And then later on, of course, that

great breakdown of the Roman empire - you know, when Christianity took advantage of the opportunity. (There is) a great correspondence between those events and those of our own time, where things are disintegrating on an even grander scale.

So, going through the Pali Scriptures and reading between the lines, one can feel as it were very much at home. Take this disturbance, as represented by the wanderers. Who were the wanderers? Why were they wandering? There is no really satisfactory explanation in strictly spiritual terms. There must have been sociological factors - people must have been shaken up a bit, a bit disturbed, in a positive sense. They left home. There was a great wandering around, looking for something, they didn't know what.

Devaraja: You get that in Western society, too. It's been happening since the beginning of the Beat Generation thing. How many young people in London now actually were born in London, or, even if they were born in London, are living in their kind of almost tribal neighbourhood?

S: So it's a very interesting time to be alive in, even though difficult in many ways. It is certainly potentially very creative.

Anyway, perhaps we have digressed enough. Let's get back to the Udana, a new chapter: Chapter VII, 'The Little Chapter'. It's probably the same length as the others, that's probably just what they call it. It might have started off as a little chapter but been gradually added to.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Sariputta was in various ways teaching, establishing, rousing and making happy the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf, with a discourse according to dhamma. Then the heart of the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf, being thus taught, established, roused and made happy by the venerable Sariputta, was released from the cankers without grasping.

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And the Exalted One saw the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf, being thus taught ... by the venerable Sariputta, and his heart ... released from the cankers without grasping; and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Above, below and everywhere set free, He sees not anywhere that 'this am I.' Thus freed he's crossed the flood not crossed before. He is no more for coming back to birth."

S: We see a quite interesting fact here:

'Then the heart of the venerable Bhaddia, the Dwarf, being thus taught, established, roused and made happy by the venerable Sariputta, was released from the cankers' ...

that is to say, the asravas ...

'without grasping'.

In other words, he became an arhant, simply as a consequence of hearing Sariputta's discourse. First he was, as it were, softened up; he was roused and made happy. The discourse put him in a very positive state of mind - very happy, very blissful, very enthusiastic, as it were. And then, as Sariputta expounded the Dhamma, he just saw the Truth on the spot; broke the fetters, destroyed the asravas, became an arhant. So that is quite remarkable, because again it suggests that the cultivation and development of the positive nidanas is not necessarily associated with sitting and meditating. What is important is the sequence of mental states that you go through, and these you can experience in any posture, as it were.

: Also it's the first mention of anyone other than the Buddha having a hand in it directly. It's Sariputta who ...

S: Yes, it is. It means the Dharma has now been fully transmitted; that Sariputta, as it were, is able to work the same spiritual miracles, as one might describe them, as the Buddha himself. Though, as we shall see in a minute, Sariputta has his limitations, even so. It also says:

'Now on that occasion the venerable Sariputta was in various ways teaching, establishing, rousing and making happy the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf, with a discourse according to dhamma.'

Perhaps it was very lengthy, perhaps he kept it up for a long time, with many illustrations, parables, digressions, explanations, analyses; Sariputta was just going on and on, getting more and more into it, more and more and more enthusiastic, and more and more carried away, and so was Bhaddiya the Dwarf. And in this way they went on until Bhaddiya the Dwarf became Enlightened! And there was the Buddha, apparently, just observing it all, and ready with his contribution - in other words, his udana:

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'Above, below and everywhere set free, He sees not anywhere that "this am I". Thus freed he's crossed the flood not crossed before. He is no more for coming back to birth.'

Quite a plain, straightforward statement; except that the commentary explains that 'above' as referring to the form world and the formless world, and 'below' as the world of sensuous desire.

: It is probably a horribly naive question, but does it actually happen like that? Is there actually a point at which you become an arhant, as it were?

S: Ah, this raises an interesting question, because, as I have pointed out, 'arhant' simply means 'worthy', and originally it seems to have been applied to those of very advanced spiritual experience - those who had more than Entered the Stream. But, later on, it came to be considered a designation for one who had as it were actually realized Nirvana. But whether Nirvana does represent the last link in the series - this is quite another question. According to Barua in *The Buddha's Personal Religion*, Nirvana only indicates the last perceivable link in an ongoing process, a process which - though this is only in a manner of speaking - goes on to infinity. So we mustn't superimpose on our own spiritual experience our rather limited linear modes of thinking, and think in terms of there being a precise 'point at which'. It is more like a horizon beyond which we can't see. But certainly, by all accounts, the arhant was one who had gone well beyond the Point of No Return, and was sort of hurtling in the direction of

Nirvana. There is also the point that, in the very earliest texts, Nirvana is much more a verb than a noun. You speak of someone as it were nirvanizing. I have used this translation in my version of the Dhammapada. The term is nibbuta - one who is nirvanized or who is nirvanizing. It is a way of functioning, not as a state which you attain. In other words, it is this uninterrupted creative process which need not have any end. You just go on and on functioning more and more creatively. Why need it come to a full stop and there you are - you are complete, perfect, in a static sort of way? You just are seen disappearing into some other dimension. And the so-called full stop is just the point as it were at which you enter that further dimension, which is not perceivable to the person who is observing you. If someone were actually to disappear into another dimension, they would appear just to come to a full stop. So, in a sense, you must be careful not to regard the Buddha himself as having come to a full stop called Buddhahood; that is just our way of thinking. It is all right for all practical purposes to think in that way, but don't take it too literally.

D Barua (?) brings this up quite clearly, basing himself upon Dhammadinna's exposition of the Dharma, where she says that Nirvana is reckoned as the last for the sake of avoiding pariyanta-gahanan - so as to be able to complete the enumeration, as it were, or for the sake of avoiding an infinite progression. You can't just go on and on, you've got to stop somewhere. The term Nirvana is just where you give up, where you don't enumerate any more.

: Parinirvana - is that just the description of going sort of over the horizon?

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S: As regards the physical body. The distinction is usually said to reside in the fact that Nirvana is that state, whatever it is, experienced in association with the physical body. Parinirvana is that same state but after the physical body has dropped off. So, when the texts speak of the Buddha at the time of his death gaining parinirvana they don't mean he had any new experience - it was just the same experience as it were going on - but simply that he became dissociated from the physical body. The one is called nibbana, the other parinibbana, sometimes mahaparinibbana.

A footnote says that Bhaddiya the Dwarf was 'etad agga of those who have a sweet voice'. And the cankers, as I think I mentioned, are the asravas, or asavas in Pali. I take it everybody knows what they are.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now at that time the venerable Sariputta was in various ways teaching, establishing, rousing and making happy the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf, with a discourse according to dhamma, all the more earnestly because he considered him to be a learner.

And the Exalted One saw the venerable Sariputta so doing, and at that time ... he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

He has cut the round and won desirelessness;

Dried utterly, the flood flows on no more; Cut off, the round revolves not. That's Ill's ending."

S: You notice that Sariputta, though he has succeeded in sparking Bhaddiya off to such a transcendental extent, doesn't fully realize what has happened. He goes on teaching him, and Bhaddiya apparently goes on enjoying the discourse. But Sariputta was considering him still to be a learner. 'Learner' has a technical meaning here, sekha, that is, one who is not yet an arhant. An arhant, using the word in the 'full stop' sense, is termed asekha, the non-learner. He has nothing more to learn. But all others - even the Stream Entrant, the Once-Returner, the Non-Returner even they are still learners, technically speaking. So such was Sariputta's enthusiasm and so intent was he on preaching the dhamma that he as it were didn't notice that Bhaddiya had actually gained Enlightenment, so he went on teaching. And, as I said, Bhaddiya went on being gladdened and stirred up by the discourse. But the Buddha sees what has happened, and the Buddha says:

'He has cut the round and won desirelessness; Dried utterly, the flood flows on no more; Cut off, the round revolves not. That's Ill's ending.'

The Buddha sees the truth of the situation. So Sariputta doesn't have quite the complete Insight, certainly as regards other human beings, that the Buddha has. The Buddha can see that Bhaddiya has been completely [412] liberated, that he is an arhant - here apparently in the full technical sense. But Sariputta doesn't see that, so he goes on happily preaching.

Sagaramati: Going back to the last verse, when you come across this 'There's no more birth' - how is that not a wrong view, as it were?

S: It would be a wrong view only if one said that there was a complete cutting off of all consciousness. The consciousness as it were remains, the purified Enlightened consciousness, but there is no more rebirth for it. One can't even say that it 'goes on', because that would imply time and it is beyond time. But it doesn't associate itself with any body, whether on the plane of sensuous desire or the plane of form or even on the formless plane. It as it were remains where it is, which is as it were 'in' Nirvana. It is quite difficult to visualize or to conceive.

Sona: It's a bit like the cowboy riding into the sunset!

S: Yes, right; yes, that's right; The end of the film.

Voice: Whew!

S: All right, let's go on; these little episodes are quite short and simple.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion men in Savatthi were for the most part clinging inordinately to desires. They lived lustful, greedy, longing, infatuated, entangled,' intoxicated with desires. And a great number of monks ... after going their rounds in Savatthi, went to the Exalted One ... and described these conditions.

Whereupon the Exalted One at that time ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Clinging, in bondage to desires, not seeing In bondage any fault, thus bound and fettered,
Ne'er can they cross the flood so wide and mighty.

S: Quite a simple, straightforward statement; but you notice the accumulation of epithets. 'They lived lustful', then 'greedy,' then 'longing,' then 'infatuated,' then 'entangled,' and finally 'intoxicated with desires.' You see the progression, or rather retrogression.

So finally one is intoxicated, as if to say completely possessed. You are no longer in your right senses. Can we look at that sequence a little more closely? I am going to use my imagination a little here. First of all, you start off by being merely lustful for some particular sense object. So as a result of your lustful feeling, you experience [413] that sense object, you enjoy it. And you enjoy it again and again, and you want to go on enjoying it again and again. In this way, you become greedy. You see how it develops? So, having become greedy, what happens? Well, you can't always be enjoying it, you have to do other things sometimes; but when you are not actually able to enjoy it then you are longing after it, and thinking about it all the time. And then you reach a state of mind when, whether you are actually enjoying it or whether you are not, you can think about nothing else; absolutely nothing else. You then become infatuated. Because you are not able to think of anything else except that, then things obviously start to go wrong. Reactions start occurring, or maybe various other aspects of your life get into a mess and start creating difficulties. In this way, you become entangled. But by that time, you don't really care, you don't really know, you don't want to know; you are completely possessed and completely carried away. In other words, you are intoxicated.

So this is the sequence, this is how it usually develops. Intoxication, you can say, is a state of not even knowing that you are entangled. That comes the morning after. So it is a quite powerful sequence of terms: lustful, greedy, longing, infatuated, entangled, and finally intoxicated with desires. Needless to say, this series can be applied to quite a variety of situations, depending, of course, upon the nature of the original lustfulness.

And then the Buddha says:

'Clinging, in bondage to desires, not seeing In bondage any fault.'

That is a strange thing: those who are in bondage in this way don't see any fault in being in bondage, don't see anything wrong with it, think it's quite all right, quite normal, quite natural, quite justified. And so in this way there is absolutely no possibility of then crossing the flood of the samsara, which is wide and mighty anyway, and reaching the other shore.

Any query on that, or is it sufficiently horrific as it stands?

Devaraja: It's quite interesting - the next one includes 'blinded'. I was just looking down; I was writing after 'entangled', 'but then you lose all perspective, you no longer care', and it sort of - ... process.

S: ... 'caught as a fish' - well, we'll come to that. All right, then, on to number iv, since you're so eager to get to it.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

(The same as the previous sutta down to) ... infatuated, entangled, blinded, intoxicated with desires.

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Then the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi to quest for alms-food. And in Savatthi the Exalted One beheld those men clinging inordinately to desires living entangled, blinded and intoxicated with desires. Then at that time, seeing the meaning of it, he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Blinded are beings by their sense-desires Spread o'er them like a net; covered are they By cloak of craving; by their heedless ways Caught as a fish in mouth of funnel-net. Decrepitude and death they journey to, Just as a sucking-calf goes to its mother.

S: Do you know what a funnel-net is? It's got a very wide mouth, so you hardly notice you're getting inside it, but it narrows, and it has a very small opening at the end, which of course admits you to a larger, closed net. So at first you don't know that you're beginning to get inside the funnel, but you just go on and finally go through the hole at the other end. And, of course, you can't then easily turn round and find your way out. You're in. So it's quite a good image; you don't know at first that you are in fact getting bound, that you are getting into the net of desires. You think it's all right.

Not only do you think you are all right ...

'Decrepitude and death they journey to, Just as a sucking-calf goes to its mother.'

Well, how does the sucking calf go to its mother? Swiftly, happily. So they go to what is fundamentally unpleasant, not knowing it is unpleasant, as though it was something pleasant; they sort of rush upon their own destruction.

No need to labour the point; it is probably sufficiently obvious, and things haven't changed very much since the Buddha's day. Not only the men of Savatthi; you can see the men of London doing just those very things. Even the men of Norfolk, come to that, and the men of Brighton. It is just the general human condition.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf, following in the footsteps of a great number of monks, went to visit the Exalted One. And the Exalted One saw the venerable Bhaddiya, the Dwarf as he came, [415] following in the footsteps of a great number of monks, while yet a long way off, - ugly, unsightly, hunchbacked and generally despised by the monks. On beholding him the Exalted One called to the monks, saying, 'Monks, do ye see yonder monk coming ... who is generally despised by the monks?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Monks, that monk is highly gifted, of a lofty nature. No easy thing it is to win that which formerly he had not won, even that for the sake of which clansmen rightly leave home for the homeless, even that uttermost goal of the Brahma-life which he has won, wherein he abides,

having come to know it thoroughly for himself and realize it!

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Pure-limbed, white-canopied, one-wheeled, the car rolls on. See him that cometh; faultless, stream-cutter, bondless he."

S: Once again, we are warned as it were not to go by appearances. You notice also that Bhaddiya the Dwarf follows 'in the footsteps of a great number of monks', that is to say, he doesn't push himself forward, he follows behind. He is quite humble, as it were. But the Buddha recognizes his attainments, the Buddha singles him out, the Buddha knows what the state of his mind really is and points it out to the other monks. The other monks weren't very kind to him, apparently; according to the commentary, the meaner monks used to pull his hair and tease him. It is interesting that they pull his hair, because it suggests that the hair isn't completely shaven. So Bhaddiya the Dwarf was 'ugly, unsightly, hunchbacked and generally despised by the monks'. But the Buddha isn't misled by appearances.

The verse is quite interesting; it is a quite poetic verse. I suspect it has got a meaning, or can be explained as having a meaning, though we are not told here what that is.

'Pure-limbed, white-canopied, one-wheeled, the car rolls on.'

The implied comparison, presumably, is with Bhaddiya himself as he really is in his true nature, as it were; just like a royal chariot, rolling along.

'Pure-limbed, white-canopied, one-wheeled, the car rolls on. See him that cometh; faultless, stream-cutter, bondless he.'

The term 'stream-cutter' seems to be even more archaic than 'stream entrant'. A very simple, straightforward, non-technical kind of description: 'faultless, stream-cutter, bondless'. So this is the Buddha's somewhat poetic description of Bhaddiya the Dwarf as he comes along, ugly as he is, misshapen as he is; but the Buddha sees him as he really is, just like a beautiful royal chariot rolling along the road.

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Devaraja: Did they have one wheel - royal chariots?

S: I am wondering about that. I am not quite sure. A one-wheeled chariot would be rather like a wheelbarrow. But I saw a film not so long ago about ancient Greece - I don't know how archaeologically correct this was, but the queen was wheeled in a sort of wheelbarrow, which was evidently a sort of royal chariot. I just don't know. I read somewhere that in ancient Malta there were one-wheeled vehicles like wheelbarrows. On the other hand, it may be that there were only two- and four-wheeled vehicles in ancient India, but for the sake of an implied comparison or to make a special point here the Buddha says 'one-wheeled', as if to suggest complete one-pointedness and oneness of resolve, and so on. Possibly; I don't really know.

Devaraja: I think 'stream-cutter' in a way is more powerful than ...

S: Yes, because it cuts across the stream. 'Pure-limbed' refers to the limbs or parts of the chariot; the word used is anga, presumably, which can mean a limb or a part or an aspect. So the chariot is pure in all its parts, well made, well fashioned, beautiful, and with a beautiful white canopy over it, suggesting it is a royal chariot; and it goes rolling along on its one wheel.

Bhaddiya the Dwarf seems in a way to have been a bit like Socrates, because Alcibiades in the Symposium compares Socrates to a figure of a satyr, an ugly creature in Greek mythology which can be opened, and inside you find the figure of a god. Isn't there some comparison like that in the Symposium, can anyone remember? (Voice assenting.) So it is quite similar to that. Socrates was notoriously ugly, with a snub nose and protruding eyes, a flat forehead and rather thickset body. He was also very sweet of speech, like Bhaddiya the Dwarf.

But people do very much go by outward looks and outward appearances. It is quite remarkable sometimes, the extent to which people do this, the extent to which they judge by appearances.

Any query on all that?

Subhuti: There's not a great deal of mention, in this anyway, of aversion or ignorance. The spotlight is on craving.

S: That's true, yes. Indians generally seem to - (break in recording)

Devaraja: ... and ignorance really was the sort of ...

S: - the basic common root. I was saying that I noticed in India that people seem more prone to craving, at least superficially, than aversion. But I noticed also that the Burmese and the Tibetans very often seemed more prone to aversion. I don't know whether one can understand anything from that or draw any conclusions from that. It is as though Indians have a greater need to incorporate, and maybe Burmese and Tibetans to reject. Indians are certainly more friendly. They strike up a friendship more quickly, they make you a member of the family more quickly. Tibetans just don't do that, or not very easily, anyway. Burmese are very quick to take offence; Indians are not. They are very slow to take offence, usually; quite forbearing. But maybe basically, inasmuch as they are both ignorance-inspired, there is no difference between them. The craving [417] type is easier to get on with and more comfortable, as it were, than the aversion type, but not therefore necessarily more skilful.

I think, therefore, one must be careful not to judge people too much in terms of whether they are easy to get on with or not. Someone is not necessarily in a more skilful state of mind just because he is easier to get on with; and not necessarily in a less skilful state of mind because he is more difficult to get on with.

: Does it depend more on whether he gets on with himself?

S: Well, in a sense, the craving type gets on with himself better than the aversion type gets on with himself; but, again, he is not necessarily more skilful. So we must not make the mistake of thinking someone is in a more skilful state of mind just because his presence does not grate on us so much, or because he is more agreeable. This is just a difference of temperament.

Someone may impinge on us much more uncomfortably than someone else, but his state of mind is not necessarily more unskillful.

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"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Anna Kondanna was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, and contemplating his release by the destruction of craving. And the Exalted One beheld the venerable Anna Kondanna so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, he gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

He hath no branches, how then leaves? whose root is not in the ground. Who is worthy to praise that man inspired, from bondage free? Not only devas praise that man; he is also praised by Brahma."

S: I take it everybody knows who Anna Kondanna was? (Voices: No.) One of the first five disciples; one of those who were originally with the Buddha in the days before he became the Buddha, before he became Enlightened, when he was practising self-mortification, and who left him in disgust when he gave up self-mortification, and whom he sought out after his Enlightenment and to whom he first taught the Dharma. So Anna Kondanna was the first of those five to understand and realize the truth of the Dharma taught by the Buddha. Kondanna is a clan or family name, and Anna, according to tradition, is a sort of nickname, meaning 'one who has understood'; the Kondanna who has understood.

So he was 'contemplating his release by the destruction of craving.' That was the particular way by which he had gone, as it were, and he is reflecting upon it, considering it. So, seeing him so engaged, the Buddha gives utterance to this udana, which is somewhat poetic and slightly riddling, as it were:

'He hath no branches, how then leaves? whose root is not in the ground.'

What do you think that means?

Sagaramati: He doesn't hold any views.

S: Mm, he doesn't hold any views; or you could say that, inasmuch as views are the product of craving and ignorance, if you consider craving and ignorance as the boughs, since there are no boughs there are no leaves in the form of false views. 'Whose root is not in the ground' - there has been a complete reversal; his root is up in the sky, you know, his root is in Nirvana. It's the sacred fig tree turned upside down; you [419] sometimes get the image in Indian literature of the sacred fig tree with its roots in the sky - not in the earth, not in the ground.

: Is that the same as the line in the Heart Sutra that says 'the Bodhisattva, holding to nothing whatever'?

S: You could look at it like that. This (says) he has no roots in the ground. He has reversed the usual gravitational pull, he is suspended in mid-air as it were, or gravitating upwards, or rooted upwards.

Also the question is raised: 'Who is worthy to praise that man inspired?' That is quite significant. Not everybody, even, is worthy to praise him. Even praise is not enough, there must be a worthy person to render the praise. 'Not only devas praise that man; he is also praised by Brahma.' Brahma being one who inhabits as it were the higher form planes and even formless planes, whereas the gods belong lower down.

The first line suggests this whole idea of turning upside down, or turning round, in the language of the Lankavatara. Or what Nietzsche called a transvaluation of all values.

: Is that the same as in the Awakening of Faith - something like devas ... changing?

S: That is the Lankavatara, the paravritti, the turning about or revulsion. You often get this idea in the Pali Canon that the Enlightened man is praised by the gods; it comes up again and again. That really suggests that the Enlightened man occupies a much higher level, a much higher plane, than the gods, who are still only mundane beings. But it also suggests that the gods have no envy, no jealousy, they are quite happy to praise the Enlightened man and be ...

Any query on that?

: 'Contemplating his release by the destruction of craving.' Is that related to one of the five methods of meditation - is it the contemplation of impurity or something like that?

S: Could be, yes, could be. It's as though there is this sort of mass of delusions and conditionings of various kinds. You don't as it were tackle the whole of it simultaneously. You work away at one aspect, and through that one aspect you get at the whole bundle as it were, the whole conglomerate. In this particular case, it suggests that what Anna Kondanna had been particularly working on was craving, possibly with the help of the asubha-bhavana.

It is naturally very difficult to start working on all your imperfections at once. If, of course, you are very methodical, you can work on craving on Monday and aversion on Tuesday, and so on through the week; or as they do in the Mahayana tradition, sort of more positively, you aim to develop dana particularly on Monday, and sila particularly on Tuesday - not that you neglect them on the other days - and on Sunday, which is your big day, you make a special effort to develop all six simultaneously. But it is quite useful, looking at it again in more positive terms, in terms of the six perfections, to devote one particular day to one particular paramita - not, as I said, that you would neglect all the others, but you are especially cultivating that particular one. For instance, if you are practising dana on Monday, then make a special effort to be very generous in body, speech and mind; if you can do even nothing else [420] at least give something to somebody; on that particular day be very ready to be of service and to do what you can for others. Whereas on other days you might consider other things more important. But on that day at least, give whatever you can, not only material things but time, energy, interest and so on. And then, say, on the Tuesday, make a special effort to be very scrupulous about the Precepts; and on Wednesday a special effort to be very patient, tolerant, friendly, not answer back, not retaliate, not react, and be very warm and friendly towards everybody. And then, of course, on Thursday, that's - well, luckily, that's Council day, because that's virya day! That's when you practise your energy. Of course, you are energetic all the time, but on Thursday, especially between 7 and 10, you are particularly energetic and zestful and full of virya. So on Thursday you make a special effort to get all your energies out all day; you don't waste a minute. And then - what is after virya? - samadhi.

Friday you relax and you devote more time to meditation. You might even spend the whole day, on and off, meditating. And Saturday, prajna, wisdom; so that might mean study. You might spend much more time than usual on that day going through Scriptures or revising your notes of seminars or things like that, or even preparing lectures. And then, of course, on Sunday, you try to be mindful of all the six paramitas and practise all of them throughout the day as occasion requires. Which is obviously quite difficult. So this is quite a good way of trying to practise them. People sometimes do this in Mahayana countries. It is just a question of as it were working systematically.

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the Exalted One was seated contemplating his abandonment of the ideas and marks of the obstacles. Then the Exalted One ... seeing that he had abandoned them, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

He in whom obstacle and continuance are no longer, He who has overcome bond and hindrance, - That worthy one, from craving free, as he fares onward, The world with its devas knows not."

S: So here once again we see the Buddha himself, contemplating his own Enlightenment, or at least an aspect of it: here the one consisting in 'abandonment of the ideas and marks of the obstacles.' This is rather obscure, even with the help of the commentary. We could say, though, that it means that the Buddha is contemplating not simply his actual abandonment of the obstacles - obstacles, that is, to Enlightenment, Buddhahood - but even the very idea of them. He is as it were so Enlightened that not only is there no obstacle any longer to Enlightenment; there is no idea, even, of an obstacle. 'Marks' is a sort of general term meaning [421] characteristics, the attributes by virtue of which you recognize something as being what it is. He had abandoned the idea and marks by means of which obstacles were to be recognized as obstacles, because the obstacles themselves had been thoroughly abandoned. The idea of an obstacle no longer really had any meaning for him personally.

There is also a suggestion in a general way that when you are free from something you are also free from the idea of it, as it were. In other words, you no longer think in those terms. The Buddha, as Buddha, no longer thinks in terms of obstacles; the very idea of obstacle has become quite unreal to him, as it were. It is only those who are not yet liberated who have to think in terms of obstacles. The Buddha himself doesn't think in terms of obstacles, and therefore doesn't think in terms of liberation, strictly speaking. He doesn't have any need to. If you are really free, you don't have to bother about freedom. You certainly don't think about freedom. You only think about freedom when you happen to be not free. So for the Buddha there's no idea of obstacles because there just are no obstacles. There is no reason why he should think of obstacles as obstacles. So you could even go further than that and say that the Buddha doesn't really even think about Buddhahood or Nirvana or liberation and so on. These are ideas that have meaning only for those who aren't Buddhas, who haven't reached Nirvana, and who are not liberated. The Buddha doesn't have to bother about them at all. The Buddha is just being himself, just being as it were his own Enlightened self.

Colin: Is this making use of all these concepts just as the raft?

S: Yes, sure. Well, from the Buddha's point of view, there is no raft; he has left the raft behind. But he doesn't mind talking about the raft as though there was a raft for the sake of other people who still need to make use of it. But, so far as he is concerned, there is no raft.

And, in the verse, he says:

'He in whom obstacle and continuance are no longer, He who has overcome bond and hindrance, - That worthy one, from craving free, as he fares onward, The world with its devas knows not.'

So there are two interesting points here. One, 'as he fares onward'. If he is an arhant, if he is Enlightened, in what sense do you say that he fares onward? Only in the sense that there isn't a complete full stop - that you're not to think of arhantship or Enlightenment as being a sort of complete full stop, a coming to a sudden halt. This is what I was saying yesterday. So, after Enlightenment, you still as it were fare onwards. You are just going on and on and up and up that transcendental spiral, as it were. The spiral just goes up and up in ever-widening circles. People lower down the spiral just see you vanishing into some higher dimension. And the point at which they see you vanish, at which they see you disappear, that they consider as the end and consider you as having reached or realized that end. They don't see that you are going on and on, on higher levels, in higher dimensions. And the Buddha says: 'That worthy one, from craving free, as he fares onward, / The world with its devas knows not.' The Buddha states it very clearly here. 'The world with its devas' doesn't really know the arhant. They just see certain external things. They might see the physical body, might even understand [422] the mind up to a point. But the inner essence they just don't see, they don't know. It is beyond their sphere, beyond their scope.

So the previous verse said that the devas praised that man, and here it says that the world with its devas doesn't know the Worthy One. So it suggests also that the devas praise, but they don't really know what they're praising. They can see something; enough, certainly, to inspire them and make them want to praise, but even they don't fully comprehend who or what they are praising.

You could say also that the devas could see what the Buddha had given up. They were quite capable of seeing that there was no craving, no delusion and so on; but what there was positively was much more difficult, if not impossible, for them to see. They can see that the Buddha is no longer behaving like other people, but what really makes him not behave like other people, what makes him what he now actually is, they cannot see. They can see the negative aspect but they can't see the positive aspect.

Sona: I was wondering if you could say something about - before one becomes an arhant, coming as it were back to the human plane, can a deva sort of become an arhant?

S: A deva doesn't directly become an arhant, because he is supposed to be too much immersed in the happiness of the higher planes, and can't really imagine that that happiness is going to come to an end. But, as we saw some days ago, the non-returner, after death - that is, after death as a human being - is reborn at the peak of the world of form, in the Pure Abodes, so therefore is reborn technically as a deva, and then gains Enlightenment from there. But this is the only sort of case that's mentioned in the Scriptures, anyway. The normal procedure is that you gain Enlightenment from the human state. This, of course, is why it's considered a

very good and lucky thing that one should be born as a human being. You've got a better chance, even, than the gods.

: What is papanca? - It's got 'raga, dosa, moha, ditthi, tanha' ...

S: Papanca literally means a sort of multiplicity. It's a sort of multitudinousness of the conditioned, you could say. And the commentary gives this explanation, that it is a whole sort of mass of raga, craving, dosa, aversion, moha, delusion, ditthi, views, tanha, craving, mana, conceit. It is all these heaps together, mixed and muddled up. The manifoldness, sometimes, it's called, papanca. Or the many-ness. The manifoldness of things, of conditioned existence. It refers to conditioned existence generally.

: What's dosa?

S: Dosa is aversion; dvesa in Sanskrit.

: Moha's hatred?

S: No, moha is delusion or bewilderment.

Sagaramati: The idea about worshipping something that you don't know - this is another beginners' question. They don't want to, say, bow to [423] the statue of the Buddha.

S: Well how can you worship what you do know?

Sagaramati: Yes, that's - !

S: You can only worship what you don't know, at least don't know fully. You've got some sort of feeling, and you can recognize that it's something higher and more developed than you are yourself. But if you know it, it means you comprehend it. You're on the same level, if not superior. So an attitude of worship then becomes not appropriate. I did go into this sort of thing a bit in my talk on 'Regular Steps and Irregular Steps'. I mentioned Coleridge's observation that there was now no reverence in the world, because you can only reverence that which is superior to you, which you don't understand. If you understand it, or think you understand it, you can't reverence it. But what happens is, we don't really comprehend something, but we have an idea of it. So we consider that, because we have an idea of it, we understand it, we comprehend it, therefore we are superior to it; therefore we don't need to show any reverence towards it. For instance, if you think that you know exactly what is meant by 'Buddha', you comprehend it. It's part of you, part of your knowledge. So, in a way, you have incorporated the Buddha idea, you have incorporated Buddhahood; it is part of you, you are superior to it, it's contained in you, so why should you reverence it? So you only reverence that which you cannot comprehend, cannot include; that of which you don't have an idea, which you don't really know, which you cannot fully understand. You just have a sort of glimmering, just a sort of glimpse, just a sort of sense. So you can only worship that which you do not understand; or rather you worship it, or have to worship it, only to the extent that you don't understand it. If you know it, you know it, and worship is out of the question, it isn't necessary. A Buddha doesn't have to worship another Buddha, a Bodhisattva doesn't have to worship another Bodhisattva, unless he is on a higher level of the Bodhisattva Path. So that's quite a thought.

So if you have no reverence for anything, it means you think you know everything; and some people do think they know everything and understand everything, so they are devoid of reverence. It is a great characteristic of modern people: no reverence for anything. I quoted also Goethe in this connection in that talk. Goethe said one should know the knowable and then - no, sorry; fathom the fathomable; he's not happy with such a fair word as 'know' - fathom the fathomable and then, he says, quietly revere the unfathomable; this is wisdom. So if you think that you have fathomed something, how can you revere it? You revere only the unfathomable, or that which you have at least not fathomed as yet. So if you are devoid of reverence, it means that your attitude actually is, at least implicitly, even if not actually expressed, that 'I know everything', or 'what I don't know isn't knowledge' - you know, as in the clerihew about Jowett, the Master of Balliol College, who said 'What I don't know isn't knowledge'!

So, in the case of worship, especially so far as beginners are concerned, the only knowledge that we can have, really, is that what we are worshipping is superior to us, and that in fact we don't understand it and don't fathom it. But in this particular case we regard it as something which we can know through our own realization of it, or what it represents, but not in any other way. We can't really know it mentally or intellectually, [424] even. Not that intellect is to be cast aside prematurely. I mean, (we should) understand as much as we can, as fully as we can, but recognize too that until we ourselves have actually come in our own being up to that level, there will always be something which we cannot understand and which we can only worship.

Subhuti: It is quite important to talk about it in terms of an ideal. Then it is somehow connected with where you are now, and the possibility of growth and development, rather than being something absolutely discontinuous.

S: Right. This is why I spoke in that lecture in New Zealand on 'The Ideal of Human Enlightenment' - and I emphasized this point. And this is where the whole idea of the Higher Evolution comes in so helpfully; because there is a sort of continuity. It does represent the continuation, on higher and ever higher levels, of a process that has already begun - in fact, in a sense, in the midst of which we already are, without fully realizing it or without really knowing it with any clarity. So if you have - well, you have already started evolving - you've been evolving, actually, for thousands of years, without really knowing it or without really recognizing it; but now you have come to the point of humanity or potential individuality, when you can look back at the whole process, realize what has been happening, and then contribute to it and even accelerate it by your own conscious and aware co-operation. So an intelligent study of the history of life and especially of human history leads one to the conclusion that the best thing you can do is consciously to co-operate with the process of your own development.

Perhaps I could ask people how they personally have responded to this idea of the Higher Evolution, especially as I presented it in those two series of lectures. I know that some people are left cold by this idea, but luckily they respond to the more traditional type of presentation. Have people here any particular reactions or comments on this?

: Yes, I find it quite inspiring in that I can relate to it much more easily than many of the Eastern ideas, (S: Good.) and it's something very concrete and quite clear that we have been evolving. You can see it in scientific terms, you don't have to worry about having to believe

in something vaguely mystical or anything, like reincarnation. It is very much a Western line of thought.

Sona: I was thinking a few weeks ago, actually, that when I first came to the Friends and was first introduced to Buddhism, I felt a little bit cold, worshipping a statue which just represented an idea or idea. I have recently found that for me there is much more warmth in worshipping or revering as it were the sort of person, the other persons, that are treading this path, and revealing it to us.

S: Well, this is very much the Indian attitude, or the Eastern Buddhist attitude, one might say. But it is an attitude that many people in this country find very difficult to adopt and, as I mentioned earlier, people in Finland even more so. They really object to the idea that anybody is a bit more developed than anybody else. But it is a quite healthy instinct, as it were, if one can develop this attitude. Not only with regard to people who are, apparently at least, more developed than oneself, but [425] even those who are better developed in certain respects, who may be (for example) more patient than you - well, admire them for that patience; or who are more kind than you, well, admire them for that kindness; or more intelligent than you, admire them for their greater intelligence, without bringing in necessarily the question of whether they are, on balance, more evolved than you or not; at least worship, as it were, those good qualities in them which are more developed than the corresponding qualities in you. And in this way people come to have a sort of positive attitude to one another mutually, because you may admire his patience but he may admire your strenuousness. You may admire his intelligence, but he may admire your patience. Of course, it mustn't degenerate into a mutual admiration society; there must be a genuine warm appreciation in a healthy way - an objective way, even; though without the coldness that the word objectivity usually implies.

Anybody else got any comments on the Higher Evolution?

Sagaramati: I was definitely very anti-evolution when I first ...

S: Were you? Ah.

Sagaramati: Probably a lot of wrong views about Buddha nature and things like that. (S: Ah!) - reading about Zen and stuff.

S: One of the darker chapters in your history! Well, how do you feel about it now? Different?

Sagaramati: I feel quite positive towards it now, definitely.

S: I know changes have taken place, for instance, Buddhadasa just could not stand that series originally, but he seems to have taken to it a bit recently, and is even playing it to one of his classes in Brighton. But he said he couldn't make head or tail of it originally, and in order to make it make sense he had to translate everything back into traditional terms! That was probably a bit exceptional. Our friend Vajrayogini in Holland was very much taken by that series. Any contrary view? Don't be afraid to express it.

: I found myself the Eightfold Path was probably ... and that's also quite evolutionary ...

S: It is quite evolutionary.

: - but I found it in a way more graspable ...

S: As I have pointed out, Buddhism itself is in fact evolutionary. But perhaps the Buddha and the early Buddhists could not bring out this aspect of the Dharma thoroughly, or could not put the Dharma in this way, or in these terms very systematically or comprehensively, simply because at that time the scientific theory of evolution had not been put forward; whereas we have got this tremendous analogue from biology, which was just not available then. We mustn't forget that. So I have come to feel that, now that we do know so much about the evolution of man and society, we are in a much better position to present the Dharma convincingly, inasmuch as we can now present it in those terms. So in a way we are in a better [426] position than the Buddha and the early Buddhists.

ABC: There are also a lot of people who do think in that evolutionary way.

S: Yes. And certainly it is a very positive way, a very encouraging way, a very inspiring way.

Sona: When I look at the evolutionary process, I find some difficulties in seeing the possibility of a new dimension. It all looks a bit linear and mechanical, as though everything came from a point at the beginning, which may have been in another dimension - but with the evolutionary process, it seems as though it came from a definite point and it is progressing to another definite point. I find it difficult to see it as an expanding process. It is a bit as though it's sort of limited, it's between two fixed points; but those fixed points aren't the beginning and the end. I see it has just a small section in the middle.

S: Of course, it's not only progressing along a line, as it were, but from that original point, as it ascends, expanding in all dimensions; so that really what you've got is, from that point, not a point going along a line to another point, but a sort of trumpet or funnel, gradually opening and expanding; so that it doesn't go as it were from this point just to that point along that straight line; it starts expanding from here and reaches this point here as it were all the way along there. It is more like that. And of course all the way along here too.

Sona: I wasn't very happy with that graph you (had) that came with the Evolution series. I think that sort of represented (from) bottom (to) top so that it had two definite fixed points.

S: Yes, quite. Well, linear thinking does have its disadvantages, or even linear illustrations, and obviously they are not to be taken literally.

Subhuti: I have been playing that series on the Wednesday night beginners' class. It is quite interesting, the different reactions. Some people really seem to have found something in it, something they can hang their vague feelings on to. Other people really react strongly against it, for very much the same reasons as you, by the way. They find it too linear and they can't see it just as a helpful framework; they get very stuck in it and bogged down in it. Some people are just frankly bored by it.

S: Ah. Do you think any particular type or kind of people?

Subhuti: I think that it's quite a middle ground sort of thing. The extreme intellectuals tend to tear it apart; it is a bit too simplistic for them, in a way. And the extreme - you know, people who have a strong emotional response, it's just too dry and dead for them.

S: Do you find that the people with the definitely emotional response respond to any material in particular so far as the lectures are concerned?

Subhuti: Quite definitely the White Lotus Sutra, yes.

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S: That's quite interesting.

Subhuti: And also, when you do tell a story in one of these, you see them light up as if they had been sitting there for ages and suddenly something has been thrown to them. But actually the series is quite uneven, in a way; the first few are expositions, mostly, and then one or two come in, like the one on the artist really inspired one or two people who were interested in the arts.

S: That just goes to show, it seems you can't please all the people all the time.

ABC: I feel that the (Higher) Evolution series of lectures is the one that will contact the most people.

S: Ah. But I think the Eightfold Path series is the most popular. (Voices agreeing.) Some time ago I was thinking of writing up the material of the Higher Evolution series of lectures in book form. I don't know now whether I shall ever be able to get around to that; maybe it will be done by somebody else. But it's not a question of just transcribing the lecture's and tidying them up; it means a thorough and much more complete and detailed working over of that same ground. Perhaps it could be - if it ever was - written in a more appealing and poetic way, disguising the dry bones, covering them with a few flowers and things.

Devaraja: At the same time retaining that very important structure.

S: Yes, exactly.

Devaraja: I was thinking when you were saying about how the more emotional type of person does not respond to that sort of material; a way, there is quite a problem attached to the more emotional type of person coming into contact with the Dharma, in that those emotions almost become an end in themselves. It could be almost any religious situation that could stimulate those emotions. (S. agreeing.) And I think that, more than anybody, that type of person does need a conceptual framework; because otherwise they are doing something that's very emotional, but it may be in a totally wrong direction.

S: In other words, they need the complementary faculty, the faculty of wisdom. They already have faith, in a sense; they need more understanding. But no doubt, as the Movement grows, this will become more and more, not a problem, but something to be provided for and borne in mind - the different needs of different kinds of people. If you only try to appeal to one kind of person, there is no problem; you just draw in people of one kind and all the rest look in once and then go away. But we don't want to do that. We want to draw people in on a general human basis, as it were, by virtue of a general human appeal. But we have to be very careful not to put off the more emotionally oriented with a particularly dry series of lectures, and maybe they don't know that other things go on. Nor do we want to give the intellectual the impression that all that goes on at the Friends is just one Puja after another, lots of chanting,

and no real intellectual nourishment. (Laughter.) Is this being felt as a problem in any way at present?

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Subhuti: Not in a general way, I think. People often say there is not enough discussion (S: Ah!)? after lectures, for instance.

S: Is that just due to a lack of time?

Subhuti: That's due to lack of time, but also, partly, discussions that we have had haven't been that successful. They are quite difficult.

S: It only needs one bore to spoil the whole discussion, or one person with a pet hobby horse or a pet micchaditthi. Or even just one particularly obtuse and persistent person.

Subhuti: Yes. We've got two.

Devaraja: Maybe there's a call for morning seminars or something like that.

S: We used to have day seminars, didn't we, long, long ago at Centre House? Two live lectures, discussion, meditation, and so on; communication exercises too, I think, sometimes. Before your time? (: Yes.) If you notice, quite a few of the single tapes, or some of them, were given in that way, because I used to say, 'This morning, Such-and-such', or 'This evening, Such-and-such.' It used to be a bit of a strain giving two live lectures and also taking everything else in between; but it can actually be done! So maybe there ought to be more day seminars? And obviously they would be attended, not by people who just dropped in - they might drop in for the evening, but not for the whole day. You'd tend to get slightly more serious people. Then perhaps you could have an hour's discussion.

Subhuti: It would be worth trying to do that.

: It should be quite significant that this television programme, 'The Ascent of Man', has been very popular. (It has been done) three times.

S: Ah, yes. I did just look through the book of the film, as it were, but it seemed to me very shallow and superficial, so I didn't even buy it. It was rather expensive. 'The Ascent of Man': by Bronowski, isn't it?

: Yes. What is it, it's just a - ?

S: A sort of resume of human evolution, and development of civilization and culture, yes? I didn't see any of the ...

: I've seen one or two of them. He tackles various things like art; one time he will talk about, perhaps, the Renaissance. In the one I saw he talked about Einstein's theory. Different aspects of evolution, science, art and so on. I don't think he (dealt with) religious ideas very much, as far as I saw.

S: But no doubt it's helpful and all a step in the right direction.

: It has been tremendously popular, repeated three times.

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S: Yes. It's been the non-fiction best-seller for weeks and weeks, I think.

: It's being repeated now again. They've just put it back on again.

S: I wouldn't mind seeing it, if I had the opportunity, just to see what it was like and what sort of thing people were being exposed to.

(Brief discussion of possibility of S. seeing programmes.)

But it is interesting, if this evolutionary approach, at however superficial a level, is drawing such widespread interest. Have you any particular comment to make on the series?

: I haven't seen enough of it; I've only seen two episodes, and they were quite interesting. I couldn't get a feel of the whole thing. But I could see why it could be very popular, because it does communicate something quite powerful which probably most people aren't terribly aware of most of the time; a feel of the overall span of human history, and a real sense of progress - something really progressing.

S: Though I think we have to be very, very careful here; because in most people's minds there is a very confused notion as to what constitutes progress, and it could add up, even in a series like that, to the idea, in many people's minds, that progress means just greater and greater material improvement, that progress is mainly technological - you know, with the arts sort of thrown in from time to time as a sort of sop.

I have been distinguishing recently between three quite different things: what I call evolution, what I call development and what I call progress. I had better mention this in passing, so that people can bear it in mind when listening to this series.

Let us go in reverse order. By progress I mean technological improvement, which may be quite unrelated to any human improvement. This is, of course, what most people mean by progress. By development I mean an aware or conscious improvement in the quality of consciousness, the level of being in general. And by evolution I mean the whole process of increasing complexity of biological forms. So these are quite distinct; progress, development and evolution. Evolution pertains to the species rather than to the individual. Development pertains to the individual; and progress pertains to, you know, the material environment, material facilities of individuals or potential individuals.

ABC: The first one is more brain work, technological ...

S: Yes, it would involve more brain work.

ABC: It's more mind.

S: Yes, it wouldn't necessarily be associated with an overall development of consciousness or being. So it does not mean that the human race as a whole has developed, just because technology, which is a product of a few very highly specialized brains, has placed certain

[430] material facilities at the disposal of the majority of people. This cannot be spoken of as constituting progress in the sense of the development of people as a whole. Even a chimpanzee can be taught to switch on an electric light. But I rather imagine that a programme like Bronowski's would not make these sort of distinctions, and that what I call evolution and what I call development and what I call progress would all be one great blur in the mind of the viewer; and that, for instance, technological improvement would be regarded as just as much part of the 'ascent' as, say, the paintings of Leonardo; they (would be regarded as) all signs of ascent, the ascent itself being as it were just one, without evolution, development and progress being distinguished from one another.

But certainly, even a general feel of an upward movement, an upward surge, has its own psychological value, especially in dim and depressing times. At least it is optimism-creating and results in an overall positive attitude towards life, which is quite good. One can sort out the distinctions and differentiations later.

Sagaramati: I saw some of these programmes on the physicists, and they were quite good, actually. They gave quite a sense of something unknown. They were saying that some of these vast theories could be best described by poets, and things like that. It wasn't just an abstract intellectual concept, but it had another level.

S: But it seems to me that if we are to have an overall intellectual structure, for want of a better term, other than the traditional presentation of the Dharma, it can only be in some such terms as those of evolution.

Devaraja: Some people try to use psychological terms... statements caused a lot of problems and transferred it - it's too narrow ...

S: Yes. I think there is a great danger of the spiritual becoming as it were transposed into the psychological. You begin by using psychological terms as the equivalents of spiritual terms, which may be all right, and then gradually you start giving a psychological meaning to the psychological terms, and they lose their spiritual connotation or spiritual meaning. This seems to be happening with some of the Tibetan centres in America, as I mentioned a few days ago. For instance, you start speaking of Enlightenment in terms of wholeness; you might even give it a capital W. And you might even explain that Wholeness means the complete development of Transcendental Wisdom and Absolute Compassion. So far, so good. But then you drop the explanation and just talk about Wholeness; Buddhism means 'achieving Wholeness'. And then people start thinking that Wholeness means oh, just leading a balanced life, a bit of healthy open-air exercise and a certain amount of work, study, family life, etc.; that is leading a life of wholeness; that's Enlightenment. In this way you have degraded the whole concept. You have got completely away from the spiritual. The term which was originally the equivalent of a spiritual term has assumed a purely psychological significance. This is the sort of thing that we see happening. This is why it is quite dangerous to try to replace the traditional terms by psychological terms.

Anything more about that section, or about evolution? While the thought is with us, I am just wondering whether anybody has any ideas or suggestions with regard to, say, the presentation of this idea [431] of the Higher Evolution, or rather the linking up of that idea more obviously with our actual practices and what we do in our public activities around the Centre.

ABC: I think it would be a good idea, but how do you mean?

S: I am just asking how. I think it would probably be a good idea, too. I am just asking for any suggestions as regards the how.

ABC: Well, the spiral ... It's very obvious - evolution ...

S: No, what I'm thinking of is how we should bring this home to people.

ABC: What, in practice?

S: Yes, not only in practice, but even to people who come along for the first time. Is there any way of making obvious that this is in fact what we are into - that it's an evolutionary thing? Something to do with development?

Subhuti: I think that comes across to a large extent in the way one talks about the practices and so forth. But at the same time, I think that the schema is one that - it's a vertical one, it doesn't have a horizontal analysis, it doesn't say that there are different components to the Higher Evolution. And perhaps that is the sort of thing that needs to be worked out first.

S: Yes. It did occur to me some time ago that there are these sort of two ways of looking at things, or two forms of presentation: the one linear and the other as it were spatial, so that the linear was in terms of an ascent, say, up the mountainside or up the successive rounds of the spiral; and the other was in terms of opening or unfoldment from a centre ...

ABC: And growth.

S: And growth. Well, the other is also growth really, but you can, if you're not careful, think of it in terms of a point moving up a line, the point itself remaining unchanged; which is not of course what happens, or should not happen. So if you think in terms of unfoldment, well, there are different aspects of that. You think in terms of the petals of a flower opening, so there is a petal which is wisdom, there is a petal which is faith, a petal which is energy, a petal which is meditation. So you need as it were this sort of double image.

You get that, of course, in the image of the plant, because a plant grows upwards, it also unfolds outwards.

: There is an alternative image, that of a pyramid, coming to a kind of point ...

S: That's true, yes. But even that is a bit architectural; it is construction rather than creation.

Subhuti: You can look at spiritual development from as if there was a pyramid which you are looking at from the side, or from on top. When you look at it from the side, you see it in terms of stages that [432] you are developing; when you look at it from on top, you look at faculties that are being developed in turns.

S: Yes, that's a good analogy.

Subhuti: And the Eightfold Path is very good in that sense, because it incorporates both.

S: Yes, right. If, of course, you look down at a pyramid, it looks like a mandala, doesn't it? It's a square divided into four sections.

Subhuti: And somehow that aspect has to be worked into the Higher Evolution schema.

S: In other words, you need a more comprehensive statement which will make use of this double image. I have referred to the Refuge Tree, haven't I? Perhaps something of that sort needs as it were working in. There is a tree with branches - or rather, it is a sort of lotus tree, it is botanically quite ambiguous, not to say impossible. You have a sort of vast, candelabra-like lotus plant, with different blossoms at the four quarters and an enormous one at the middle, on which Padmasambhava sits.

Subhuti: Evolution is often represented pictorially in the form of a tree, isn't it?

S: Yes, like a vast genealogical tree, showing your ancestry from the apes.

Devaraja: It is sometimes represented in the form of a pyramid, with different strata, levels ...

S: But it does seem as though we need this sort of double presentation, which shows the upward progression and the outward expansion at the same time.

Sagaramati: The Bodhi tree, representing evolution, with the Buddha sitting at the foot of the Bodhi tree.

S: And of course the ascent of the kundalini and the lotuses with different numbers of petals opening at different points up the median nerve as the kundalini ascends. Or perhaps we want something even more radical than that. But it did seem to me that there are these two approaches. The five Spiritual Faculties does refer to the second approach, the unfolding and developing. So there is an aspect of progressing from where you are now, but also an aspect of unfolding what you are now. No doubt, according to temperament, people will prefer one emphasis or the other; but you should never neglect the other.

Sagaramati: Could you say those two again?

S: Well, first of all a progress of ascent from where you are now, or from what you are now; and the other a process of expansion of what you are now. The first speaks in terms of climbing, making an effort, growing, developing, moving upwards, moving onwards, Excelsior, [433] climbing up the mountain, spiritual mountaineering, all that sort of thing. And the other speaks in terms of - well, just being as you are, but as it were more so, expanding, opening, developing. In a way, to some people, this is reassuring because it suggests though this is quite wrong, in a way - that you don't have to change very much, you are just being what you are now only more so. You've already got some faith; all right, you develop it more and more. You've already got some intelligence; you develop it more and more. A little energy, all right, you become more and more energetic. You are just unfolding, just developing where you are now. So this, to some people, is more acceptable. You might even say, though we are probably treading on quite dangerous ground here, that the imagery of ascent is more as it were masculine and the imagery of unfoldment is as it were more feminine.

Subhuti: I have quite noticed that, actually: women do tend to be more attracted to the more organic representations, and men to the more goal-oriented representations.

S: What about men who react to the whole idea of Higher Evolution? (Subhuti laughs.)

Devaraja: I think in a way, though, that there is a bigger danger in the unfoldment approach, in that it works on, I suppose, the kind of atmavada ...

S: It can, if you are not careful, be allied with the idea that, well, you are Enlightened already, you've just got to open up a bit. But I think it is an aspect which cannot be neglected entirely by any means.

Subhuti: And there is a danger in the idea of ascent that there is a 'you' which remains the same, rather than the path being ...

S: The pilgrim being the path. (Subhuti agrees.)

: In a way, the idea of the ascent might be frightening in that it implies a great degree of radical change; it is like much more of a shedding process.

S: Yes. But often people don't think of it like that.

Sona: I was just thinking of the analogy of an inverted cone - as though you were at a point but you have to go ascending and at the same time you are going outwards. It is a sort of process where there's no limits, you continue expanding outwards.

S: That is what I meant when I referred to the trumpet: it is like a trumpet flower, you could say, expanding. But probably the most complete image is that of the plant itself, which goes up and also out. So in a way that is the Eightfold Path, isn't it?

Subhuti: I think you probably need a new splitting up, as it were, of the areas of development, perhaps in terms of the kind of practices that we do, the different practices that we do.

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Devaraja: Can you say more about that?

S: I have spoken about that in the past. For instance, I have explained all our activities under the heading of the Spiritual Faculties. I have done this several times. I have said that we have meditation classes to help develop the faculty of samadhi; and then we have the Puja and the chanting to develop the faculty of faith, saddha; and then there are lectures and study groups and seminars to develop the faculty of prajna, wisdom; then we have things like - in those days very weakly represented - organizational activities and jumble sales and fund-raising and bazaars and so on, to help develop virya; and then, of course, mindfulness was necessary all the time.

Maybe we should even have this pictorially represented, even get someone to do a sort of lotus with four great petals and maybe some subsidiary and intermediate petals, showing all our activities in this way; so that, as soon as people enter, they see just what it's all about. And it makes it clearer how the activities are organized - in the organic sense, not the

administrative sense.

ABC: That's a very good idea, very helpful.

S: This is what I was meaning by making the whole evolutionary idea - this is just half of it - clearer to people when they just happen to come along.

: This idea came up in a study group a month or two back. We were talking about the Higher Evolution. And this little diagram came out. Some people were, I think, in danger of taking it too literally, too scientifically, as a graph. And we talked this over, and came to the conclusion that it was more like a symbol than like a scientific, mathematically exact picture. And it occurred to me then that perhaps one ought to paint this rather than do the drawing of it in a quasi-scientific way.

S: I have made this suggestion before, but no one was in a position to take it up. Maybe it requires quite a bit of thinking out.

: It is not the sort of thing that one can do quickly or easily. It means inventing a symbol which can't just be done like that.

S: I would like, even, to see an illustration; even if one can't produce a symbol, at least produce an illustration. And there is a lecture of mine in which I speak in terms of the Wheel of Life and then the spiral going up from that and culminating in the Mandala of the Five Buddhas at the top. That could be pictorially represented.

: This might sound very far-fetched. I hadn't connected it with this, but I had a rather fantastic idea quite some time ago about devising some kind of game. I had something rather like Monopoly in mind ...

S: I don't know anything about Monopoly.

: Well, it's like a circular Snakes and Ladders - which would somehow incorporate the idea of the circle and the spiral. [435] I have never carried the idea very far, because I think it would be quite a difficult thing to do without slipping from the sublime to the ridiculous. But if one could devise some kind of - it would almost have to be some kind of ritual game, whereby it wasn't just a static symbol, it was something that moved, maybe even with counters over squares ...

S: Human counters, eh?

: Well, they would represent that. It would give the picture of ...

S: I mean actual human beings as counters, like in living chess, which kings used to play in the old days with slaves. Well, it could be tried.

: We speculated on a similar thing in S...hill, based on the Wheel of Life, a sort of board ...

: That was my basic idea.

: Same idea with counters.

: The circle and the spiral.

S: But what one means is to try to make this whole idea of the Higher Evolution, both in its more linear and its more spatial aspects, much more vivid to people; if possible, by means of a symbol, or at least by means of an illustration or illustrations, and even by the whole structure of the Movement, as it were.

Devaraja: ... an iconography that is, say, as inspiring as ...

S: Yes, right. It shouldn't be just a matter of telling people, of communicating conceptually. It should be implicit in the whole structure of things. Ideally, we should be able to build, eventually, our own headquarters, a great central pyramid or stupa-like structure, with radiating wings for different kinds of activities.

: A lotus throne.

S: Well, the whole thing would be a lotus throne.

: This, in some degree, was developed, surely, in Tibet with the special kumbum type of stupa, which was ...d inside into various chambers ...

S: Well, the Borobudur, even more so. Or even the three-storied Nepalese temple, where you have an image of the Nirmanakaya on the ground floor, on the first floor an image of the Sambhogakaya, and on the second an image, or maybe non-image, of the Dharmakaya, which was usually a naked Buddha figure. So that Padmasambhava, Avalokitesvara, Amitabha, usually, in the more ... temples. This embodies your ideal and your successive stages of spiritual ascent, even in an architectural form.

What I mean is that there should be something around at least that, right from the immediate first impact, communicates to people, preferably [436] in non-conceptual terms, what it is all about or what we are involved in or what we represent. They shouldn't just have to learn about it conceptually or verbally. Obviously, that is going to be fairly difficult, until we can plan everything from the beginning. That won't be for quite a while yet. But perhaps we can do something.

I don't know whether there is any way in which we could as it were plug the idea of evolution much more than we actually do - whether there shouldn't even be a little booklet, a little pamphlet, on evolution. There is a tiny reference to it in one of those things that you gave me and I thought that was quite good. It makes it very clear. But perhaps something that spelt it out at somewhat greater length, and something which is generally available and around and known. So that there is that emphasis all the time.

Subhuti: I think it is very much needed, in fact.

S: Otherwise, though in fact everything that we do does hang together, and does contribute to the same end, it may not be obvious to the newcomer. It may seem just like a collection of disparate activities, which are all being carried on because they happen, traditionally

speaking, to be all part and parcel of that great complex that we call Buddhism. So perhaps we should be much clearer and more emphatic about what we fundamentally stand for - this is what I'm getting at - so that the wood is not lost to sight for the multiplicity of the trees. Anybody got any comments from the point of view of their own initial approach to or contact with the Movement? Does anybody get the impression that there are lots of trees but where was the wood, sort of thing, or what was this wood?

Colin: I think so. The whole thing seemed very vague when I first came.

S: In this sort of way?

Colin: Yes. I could sense it was what I was looking for, but there didn't seem to be any specific framework or structure.

S: When you say framework or structure, what do you mean? What did you think was missing or lacking? In what sort of way?

Colin: Well, the thing you were just talking about: making the basic thing of evolution really clear.

S: Making it clear what everything added up to?

Colin: Yes. A sort of central principle, that sort of thing.

: I think when I first came I felt quite similar to that, in that some things I took to, like the lectures and the meditation, and other things I had a reaction against, like Puja to begin with, and so forth. It seemed to me that I could go along for some things and I could just avoid the others and I'd be fine. I didn't see why all of them had to be gone through, to be put together. And I remember hearing, fairly early on, the series 'Higher Evolution of Man', and that did inspire me to make sense of the whole thing.

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Colin: Another thing: it seemed a bit part-time, you know? Whatever it was you were supposed to be getting involved with only happened on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings - you know what I mean? It was difficult to relate it ...

Sagaramati: ... the general Order member ... the force of human (??) existence is very important. It's something you carry around with you, as it were, all the time. It's the Ideal. Initially, anyway, the Tuesday night, or whatever night you came, tended to be a night spent in a certain activity; you know, continuity is very difficult to keep going.

S: Though, possibly, the majority of those who do come along at first don't want anything more than a weekly evening, as it were. But it does become important to introduce people as early as possible to the basic and general idea underlying all the evenings and all the activities.

Subhuti: Quite a lot of people do not want to be involved more than one or two evenings a week, but several people have come along - one of them really brought home to me the fact that we can't really cater for people who have already made a certain commitment; you know,

they come along and have already decided they want to get quite strongly involved with something, and until we got the Mitra system in operation there was nothing for them at all.

S: Well, perhaps eventually that will be extended to not only Mitra and Kalyana Mitra weekends, but one-month retreats and three-month retreats, and all that kind of thing. I am looking forward to it already! - the continuing spiral.

Perhaps what emerges is that there's a very definite need to make much clearer and more vivid what everything adds up to, and what it fundamentally is all about, and what are the principles involved; so that people can see where their little bit, if it is a little bit for the time being, fits in, and what, therefore, they are really doing and what specifically they are working on at any given time or when they are involved in any given activity.

Sona: Thinking back to when I came to the Centre, the first few times I was looking around and I noticed there were a lot of leaflets. I looked all through the leaflet - but it was very thin - for something to tell me not just what the Friends were - that they were people committed to something; that didn't mean very much. But I didn't find anything, and so I started reading books on Buddhism, and became quite confused! Then I read more books on Buddhism, and became more confused!

S: So really, it means first of all that what is needed is some quite clear and vivid statement about things in general: the whole of life, history, evolution, and then there the Friends and its activities fit into that. This is what it really means, isn't it?

: There's a good thing at the end of 'Perfect Effort', a quite good treatment on that. It might lend itself to being ...

S: I don't recollect that.

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: When you talk about something that Julian Huxley said about all the sciences pointing to this, er ...

S: Oh yes, I remember now. I rather suspect that what I did there was to summarize quite a lot of material from the Higher Evolution series. It is a very long lecture, isn't it? I think I heard it in New Zealand. It is one of the longest.

We also, clearly, need a few more writers, not to speak of artists, to work on these things and produce something, because I can't always do it myself. I may well soon conclude I've done my bit and sort of go into retirement and leave it to the lads to carry on!

Subhuti: Mara whispered something in your ear! (Laughter.)

S: No, I don't think it was Mara, actually, to be quite honest.

: STAY ON!!

S: Well, I'll consider it. Anyway maybe these things should be left to people just to think over, and maybe produce some symbols or at least some illustrations or pamphlets if they can.

All right, let's go on. There's time at least for one short sutta.

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"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the venerable Kaccana the Great was seated not far from the Exalted One in cross-legged posture, holding his body upright, with mindfulness as to body well set up before him in his inner self. And the Exalted One beheld the venerable Kaccana the Great so doing, and at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

In whom is mindfulness on body centred In every way and always, as he thinks; - It could not be, for me it cannot be; It shall not become, for me 't shall not become: - Thus ranging on in thought from state to state In time he'd pass (the craving) that embroils."

S: Well, in this little episode Kaccana is practising mindfulness as to body. I think we had that once before: somebody else was practising mindfulness as to body. There is also a sort of reference back to a previous udana:

'In whom is mindfulness on body centred In every way and always, as he thinks;- It could not be, for me it cannot be; It shall not become, for me 't shall not become:-' ...

that is to say, the unskilful states ...

'Thus ranging on in thought from state to state In time he'd pass (the craving) that embroils.'

This almost suggests that mindfulness is enough, even mindfulness of the body; you are practically there already if you can practise that. Mindfulness of the body being one of the four basic forms of mindfulness, the others being mindfulness of feelings, thoughts and the Teachings.

Have we been having lately at the Centre the tapes which deal with the four dimensions of mindfulness or awareness?

Sagaramati: Which tapes deal with them?

S: I don't remember.

Subhuti: Ah, in 'Mind Reactive and Creative', or something like that.

S: Not really. There is one - perhaps it isn't even on tape; but there is certainly a lecture which may be partly on tape, incorporated in some other lecture, on the four dimensions of awareness: awareness of self, awareness of the external world, awareness of other people and of Reality. There was originally a whole lecture on these, but that might not have been taped. But that material, shortened, is incorporated in -

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Subhuti: 'Perfect Mindfulness'.

Sagaramati: And in the 'Higher Evolution of Man' it comes up.

S: Well, in 'Aspects of the Higher Evolution of the Individual', not in the 'Higher Evolution of Man'.

: I think it's in the beginning of 'Alienated Awareness and Integrated Awareness'.

S: Ah. This is to some extent different aspects. It's not exactly a linear progression. And it's more or less complete. I spoke about these in Helsinki, by the way, and they went down there very well indeed. The subject seemed quite suited to the audience.

Sagaramati: You say it's not a linear progression?

S: Not quite, I said. Because there is, you know, Reality at the end, which is in a way highest; but the others could be regarded as complementary. Because if you can gain Enlightenment, apparently, simply by mindfulness of the body, you can hardly regard mindfulness of feelings as higher and mindfulness of thoughts as higher still, and so on. So they are different aspects of oneself - one's body, one's feelings, one's thoughts, and what one knows about the Teaching. So this is predominantly the spatial rather than the linear approach.

: But is it OK to give it a linear treatment?

S: I think there wouldn't be any harm. It could be done, certainly.

: Because it does seem to me that there is quite a valuable sort of linear treatment of it, and that it starts with this kind of material.

S: Though, apparently, if we take this udana very literally, you can go straight from awareness of the material - the material body - to Nirvana.

Subhuti: Well, really, full awareness of any one of the levels involves all the others, in a sense, doesn't it?

S: One could say that, at least potentially.

Also, the four kinds of mindfulness - that is to say, the mindfulness of body, feelings, thoughts and the Teachings - are explained in greatest detail in the Pali Canon in the Mahasatipatthana Sutta. You notice that they themselves are called the catur satipatthana - the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, or Fourfold foundation. There is no suggestion of progressive steps or stages. Apparently all equally are foundations; or they are all equally to be established. Certainly they are done one after the other, but when you are describing even faith, wisdom and so on, if you enumerate them you have to enumerate them one after another. But that doesn't necessarily suggest an actual linear progression. It can be just going round the petals of the lotus.

Subhuti: Even the five Spiritual Faculties can be given a linear -

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S: They can, yes, and in the Scriptures they are sometimes.

Subhuti: It is quite significant that most of those lists can actually be looked at from both points of view, can't they?

S: You could say that, as it's also said quite clearly that all the nidanas of the pratitya samutpada are simultaneous as well as successive.

You notice it says, with regard to 'mindfulness on body centred': 'In every way and always.' No respites, no holidays from mindfulness.

I am not quite sure what the 'as he thinks' means. - Oh, 'as he thinks: "It could not be, for me it cannot be"'. Maybe it refers to that. In other words, as he practises the mindfulness of the body, he thinks: 'It' - that is to say, the unskilful thought - 'could not be, for me it cannot be', and so on. You know, this rather old-fashioned punctuation.

Devaraja: Does 'thus ranging on in thought from state to state' imply mindfulness, surely, of mental states as well, feelings and thoughts?

S: I think 'Thus ranging on in thought' means reviewing sort of state after state; that is to say, the unskilful states which he is already reflecting 'cannot be'; in other words, as he goes on reviewing the absence of unskilful thoughts in himself. It seems to suggest that to me. It is 'ranging on in thought', not being mindful of thoughts.

Devaraja: Yes. But 'state to state', does that imply - ?

S: 'State to state' seems to refer to the absence of the unskilful mental states which are referred to in 'It could not be, for me it cannot be; / It shall not become, for me 't shall not become'. He is thinking there of those unskilful states which cannot now for him come into existence, and he is mentally surveying those states and the impossibility of their coming into existence. In that sense, he is 'ranging on in thought from state to state', so that, if he keeps it up, eventually all craving will be destroyed.

: I.e., all unskilful states will come to an end?

S: Yes. Well, craving is mentioned here particularly, but no doubt unskilful thoughts in general.

: What I was trying to clarify is that you said in one lecture that mindfulness resolves unskilful mental states. And I wondered if that was the implication here - that maybe in time he would pass the craving or the unskilful mental state that entangles him, through his practice of mindfulness of any unskilful mental states that he has.

S: No, I think the emphasis here is that, through his mindfulness of the body, unskilful mental states are prevented from arising. And he goes on considering their non-arising and the fact that they are being kept at bay. And, if you can go on doing this indefinitely, you will come to the ending of all unskilful thoughts; you will exhaust them, as it were; there just won't be any more left, or even the possibility of their arising.

Any further query on that? We are practically at the end of the session.

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Subhuti: 'In his inner self' - has it said that before?

S: Where's that?

Subhuti: 'With mindfulness as to body well set up before him in his inner self'.

S: Mm. I don't know what the Pali here would be; 'his inner self'. I'm a bit suspicious, actually. But I imagine it means something like 'with his mindfulness as to body being wholeheartedly practised' - you know, right from the centre of himself, right from the depths of himself, as it were. All his energies are into that. I'd like to see the text there for that 'inner self'. It doesn't sound very Buddhistic or very Pali text-like. I think we ought to get the Pali. We might have it at Aryatara. Otherwise it probably is available.

Subhuti: Mm, there is a Pali copy there.

S: It is at Ayratara? We should look at it some time. There are several things to be looked at, in fact. Will you make a little note there? 'Inner self' would literally be antaratta or something like that, 'antara atta'. I don't remember any such term at all. Anyway, the general meaning is clear. Any other query or comment?

Subhuti: Was Kaccana the one who refused to join in the First Council?

S: No. There was a monk who said that he had heard the Teaching from the Buddha and what he remembered he would remember, and he was quite happy with that and didn't want to join in the chanting. That wasn't Kaccana. I think it was Purna; I won't be certain of that. He was etad agga of those who analyse, that is the vibhajjavadins.

This is connected, of course, with the four possible ways of dealing with or answering a question. Are you familiar with this, or have you heard it before? Kaccana, or Mahakaccana, is called the first of those who analyse. In fact, the Buddha himself was known as an analyser, a vibhajjavadin; and the Theravadins often called themselves vibhajjavadins or analysers. So it refers to these four possible ways of dealing with a question. The first way is to answer as it were directly or even dogmatically. The second is to ask a counter-question. The third is to analyse - 'if you are asking the question in such-and-such sense, then the answer is so-and-so, but if you are asking it in another sense, the answer is such-and-such.' This is 'to analyse', to break up the question into its constituent parts and to sort out what they all really mean, and then to answer. And the fourth is, of course, silence. So the Buddha and his follower are called vibhajjavadins, and Mahakaccana was particularly good at this. He is the author of a little work, a sort of analytical work on the Buddha's teaching, which is included in the Tipitaka itself, in the Khuddaka Nikaya.

Devaraja: Does the third one - to analyse which sense the question is asked in - does that include trying to establish the motivation of the person asking the question?

S: No. It means really trying to sort out what the question actually [442] is - what it is really asking. For instance, suppose someone says, 'Is it good to leave home?' You will say, 'Well, it depends what you mean by that. Do you mean is it good for a man with a wife and family to leave home? Or do you mean, is it good for anybody to leave home, possibly someone

without a wife and family? Because it will depend on whether you ask the question in the one sense or the other what the answer actually is.' So you analyse or break up the question before answering it.

: In other words, you establish exactly what the question really is.

S: Yes. Then, of course, very often, the answer becomes obvious, once you have broken up or clarified the question. It answers itself, very often, then. In other words, it was a pseudo-question.

: Asking a counter-question would be included in that sort of process, in order to get at the real question?

S: Yes.

Sona: Also it seems it would depend on who is listening, (because they) would know what the person was trying to ask.

S: Yes.

: I often find that, (with category) one, there's almost no point in approaching it on those terms.

S: For example, 'Does Buddhism teach reincarnation?' Well, you think: 'Can't say yes, can't say no.' All right, you can say, 'Well, what do you mean by reincarnation?' You know, you can put the counter-question. Or you can say: 'If you mean by reincarnation such-and-such, then Buddhism does teach it, but if you mean such-and-such, then it doesn't.' Or you can think: 'Whatever I say is going to be misunderstood,' so you just keep quiet - hoping that something of your profound, thunder-like silence will penetrate to that obtuse person's mind!

: Or if you are totally defeated, hide behind some kind of obscure, poetic statement!

S: Right! Or you can have recourse to the pseudo-esoteric response: 'Well, that you will know when you are Enlightened - or a little further along the Path.' (Laughter.) You know, something like that.

: 'When the birds are singing in the sky.'

S: Or, if you want to be really witty, you can say: 'The tree in the courtyard,' (laughter) or something like that. Oh yes, 'The cypress tree in the courtyard,' isn't it?

: What do you mean by that? (S. laughs.)

: What was that reply you gave someone once - asking them if they had a right to ask the question, and you said that you also had the right not to answer it?

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S: Mm, mm. Well, you have your rights, too, don't you, obviously? Rights are always mutual, like duties. Talking of duties, it's very nearly time for lunch.

Sona: Has the 'Higher Evolution' been transcribed?

Sagaramati: I don't think the whole of it has.

Subhuti: I don't think any of it has.

S: I think I probably tended rather to discourage that by saying that I thought I ought to write it all out in book form. I'm not very happy having it in just transcribed form. But I don't know, I am slowly perhaps having to reconcile myself to these things, just so that the material should be available, even though in a quite inadequate and inelegant form.

Subhuti: But if it's transcribed that can be a basis for somebody else working it up.

(Short discussion on this possibility.)

"Thus have I heard: Once the Exalted One was going his rounds among the Mallas together with a great company of monks, and reached Thunan a brahmin village, of the Mallas. And the brahmin housefathers of Thunan heard the rumour: They say, friend, that Gotama the recluse, who went forth from the Sakyan clan, is going his rounds among the Mallas with a great company of monks and has reached Thunan. Accordingly they choked up the well to the brim with grass and husks, with the idea: Don't let those shaveling recluses get water.

Now the Exalted One, stepping off the highway, went towards the root of a certain tree, and on getting there sat down on a seat made ready, and on sitting down called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Come, Ananda, get me a drink from this well.'

At these words the venerable Ananda replied to the Exalted One: 'Just at present, sir, that well is choked to the brim with grass and husks by the brahmin housefathers of Thunan, with the idea: Don't let those shaveling recluses get water.'

Then a second time the Exalted One repeated his request, and the venerable Ananda made the same reply. A third time also the Exalted One repeated his request, and then the venerable Ananda replied, 'Very well, sir,' to the Exalted One's request, and took the bowl and went towards that well.

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Now as the venerable Ananda drew near that well, it vomited forth all that grass and husks and remained brimful of water, translucent, unmuddied and tranquil, and even overflowed, methinks.

Then the venerable Ananda thought: A marvel indeed! A miracle indeed has been wrought by the mighty power and majesty of the Wayfarer! Why, this well, as I approached it, vomited forth all that grass and husks, and now stands brimful of water, translucent, unmuddied and tranquil, and even overflows, methinks! So taking water in the bowl he returned to the Exalted One, and on coming to him exclaimed, 'A marvel indeed! A miracle indeed has been wrought by the mighty power and majesty of the Wayfarer! ... Let the Exalted One drink the water! Let the Wellfarer drink the water!'

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse

of uplift:

What should one do with a well, when water's everywhere? What should one go a-seeking, when craving's cut at the root?

S: From this little episode, we can understand something of the hostility which existed towards the Buddha on the part of some at least of the brahmins - that is to say, the brahmins by birth, the members of the brahmin caste. I think this is the first time in the Udana we have seen this hostility, apart from the hostility of the wanderers, some of whom were of brahmin origin. But here it is specifically the brahmins, in fact the brahmin housefathers of Thunam. And later on, of course, hostility of the so-called orthodox brahmins to the Buddha and his teaching became quite pronounced. There are many evidences of it elsewhere in the Pali Canon.

You see that the Buddha is going his rounds among the Mallas. The Mallas were a sort of tribal people. They had a sort of republic, and it seems that a particular village, or rather perhaps a particular area of land, had been donated to the brahmins, so that they could have a village there and live and follow their Vedic practices, and possibly supported by the people. But they were clearly not at all friendly to the Buddha and his disciples. They refer to them as - in the English translation it is 'shaveling recluses'. It is mundaka in Pali, which means simply 'the shaven ones' or 'the shavelings', in a very contemptuous sense. This is one of the ways in which the orthodox brahmins habitually referred to the Buddha and his disciples: mundakas.

When one is wandering about in that way, one obviously needs water. It is very hot; you get very thirsty; there may not be any river. But there was a well. And the brahmin housefathers no doubt guessed that the Buddha would need water to drink, so they blocked up the well in advance with grass and husks so that the Buddha and Ananda couldn't get any water. But there is a miracle, and the Buddha does get water.

It has been pointed out that one can look at this little episode as having not exactly a symbolical but perhaps an allegorical meaning: that the well means something, the water means something, the water that [445] the brahmins were trying to keep for themselves, trying to keep to themselves. What do you think this might have been?

: Sort of spiritual authority and teachings.

S: Yes, the brahmins quite definitely tried to monopolize religious truth, or what was considered as religious truth; whereas the Buddha was quite prepared to make it available to anyone who was in a position to benefit from it. The brahmins also charged for their services, they charged for their teaching as it were; they charged for the performance of sacrifices. Whereas the Buddha and his disciples gave everything as it were freely, gave their teaching without any thought of remuneration. In fact, the Buddha is represented in one part of the Pali Canon as saying, 'I am not one who has the closed fist of the teacher and who keeps something back.' The brahmins always had to keep something back, something that they did not impart, something that only they knew. Of course, you can't really do this with spiritual truths. You can do it with information, even with quasi-religious information; you can do it with doctrines and traditions; but you can't really do it with regard to spiritual truth in the strict sense, just as you can't really communicate spiritual truth to someone who is not in a

position to receive it. But certainly in those days the brahmins considered that they had a monopoly of culture, learning, education, what passed as spiritual knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and that they were entitled to keep up that monopoly, that only they should be teachers, others should not be teachers. In fact, as I have mentioned on other occasions, one of the great criticisms of the Buddha made by orthodox brahmins, a criticism which continues right down into the Indian middle ages, was that himself being a kshatriya by birth he dared to teach - which was the function of the brahmin. There is a quite well-known work by an orthodox Vedic brahmin called Kumaralabatta(?), who lived, I think, roughly in the seventh century. This work is called Sloka Vartika. In it, he says that the Buddha's teaching, even though it may be true, should not be accepted. And he gives a comparison. He says, 'Milk is to be drunk, milk is drinkable, it's pure, it's good. But if milk came to you in the skin of a dog, you wouldn't touch it. In the same way, what the Buddha actually says may be true, but since it comes from the lips of a kshatriya who, not being a brahmin, has no right to teach, it should be rejected.' This is the typical orthodox brahmin view, which continues to some extent, in a diluted form admittedly, right down to the present day: that the brahmin alone has the right to teach. The brahmin is quite literally the born teacher, as it were, or the teacher born. It was this sort of thing that the Buddha was up against. So this is one of the reasons for the hostility of the brahmins to the Buddha and his teaching - in fact, the main reason - that he undermined their monopoly, as it were; he criticized their pretensions.

So, in the quite literal historical level, they sometimes exhibited quite marked hostility towards him, even going so far as to stop up the well when he came to their village. But this stopping up of the well can have this other as it were allegorical meaning: that they were the ones who tried to close up the wells of religious knowledge, even spiritual knowledge, to prevent others having free access. But the Buddha, by his mighty magic power, as it were, defeated the attempt of the brahmins to keep religious knowledge and spiritual wisdom to themselves. He made it available to everybody who was able to drink of it.

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Some historians carry this line of thought rather too far and take it rather too literally. They suggest that the brahmins had an actual possession of certain spiritual truths, and that the only difference between them and the Buddha was that the Buddha, having possession of those same spiritual truths, made them available to all and sundry - that it was the same teaching, the same truth. But this can't be accepted, inasmuch as real truth is of such a nature that it is not just communicable, it as it were naturally communicates itself. If you really have what is the Truth, if you really have that high degree of Insight, understanding, Wisdom, Enlightenment, you can't think in terms of keeping it for yourself. So if you think in terms of keeping it for yourself, it can't be that - not really; you don't have that knowledge, that Insight, that Wisdom, or that Enlightenment, if you can even think of keeping it as a private possession for yourself or your caste or your community; if you can think, even, of making a monopoly of it. So we mustn't think, as some seem to have thought, that the brahmins had certain secret teachings which were true, which they knew, which they had mastered, and it was simply these secret teachings that the Buddha broadcast as it were much more widely. We mustn't think of it like that. It is much too literalistic.

Any other point arising out of this episode? You could, if you liked, find some significance in the fact that they choked the well up with grass and husks, because the husks are the empty shells, as it were. All that the brahmins really had was the husks. And, of course, in preventing others from having access to the water, you also interfere with your own access to

it.

: There seems to be a lot of emphasis on the Buddha drinking the water. When Ananda gives him the water, he really ...

S: Ananda, no doubt, is very pleased that he has got water for the Buddha to drink under those circumstances.

There's this little word 'methinks', which of course suggests the editor. He can't altogether keep himself out. This is his only actual indirect reference to himself in the whole of the Udana. Perhaps, even, as it came down to him, it was simply 'brimful of water, translucent, unmuddied and tranquil', but the compiler or editor probably added 'and even overflowed, methinks'. But he puts in the 'methinks' to mean 'That's what I think. It is not exactly what has come down to me.'

I must say that I had some personal experience in India of what the Buddha's attitude might well have meant to the people of India - the ordinary people, the non-brahmins - at that time. I remember when I was going around among the ex-Untouchables and giving lectures and talks about Buddhism, even about quite standard Buddhist teachings, the people - that is to say the ex-Untouchables who were attending those lectures - were not only extremely interested in the content but really enraptured at the idea that they were being permitted to listen to a religious teaching, to religious truth, that this was being now communicated to them, was being opened or made open to them. Whereas, formerly, when they were Hindus, they were not allowed access to any religious teaching - at best, a little bit of devotional singing and nothing more than that; and, of course, certainly nothing of a Vedic nature. They weren't even supposed to hear the mantras of the Veda, that is to say, the verses of the Veda. According to the Manuskriti, which is the most well-known of all the orthodox Hindu law books, if a sudra, that is a man of the lowest of the four castes, [447] happens to hear the words of the Vedas, red-hot lac is to be poured into his ears. This is quoted, apparently with approval, by Sankara in one of his commentaries, he being the greatest of the orthodox Hindu philosophers and commentators on Vedic texts, especially the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. And this was still very much in force, right down to the present, and is still very much in force - not that actual punishment, of course, but the attitude of keeping religious knowledge away from the members of the lowest castes. And this is why I noticed that, wherever we went, these ex-Untouchables were really thrilled by the mere idea that religious knowledge was actually being opened to them, that they could come and hear, that they were welcome, that they could listen, that they could understand, that it was not being withheld from them by the Buddhists as it was by the Hindus. And this was perhaps very much the way in which many people in the Buddha's day received his teaching: here was a great teacher who felt that they were worthy to listen, worthy to hear; who didn't just go off into the forest with a few disciples who were in a position to pay him for his teaching, but who went about teaching all who could benefit from it, without any consideration of remuneration.

This must have really upset the brahmins: that here was someone going about giving real teaching, real spiritual instruction, real help and freely; which meant that their services, for which there was not so much of a demand as before anyway, were being rendered even more unnecessary or superfluous, and their whole prestige, their whole position in society, undermined. And even some Hindus with whom I was in contact were not quite happy that ex-Untouchables should be freely taught Buddhism. There was no doubt that (the

ex-Untouchables) were just as intelligent as anybody else, and could follow everything just as well. But one could still see that brahminical attitude at work. Some orthodox Hindus reconciled themselves to it in the end by saying: 'Ah well, Buddhism will keep them happy, but it isn't, of course, such an advanced teaching as that of the Vedas and the Vedanta. So at least these people won't have access to the Vedas and Vedanta. They are just being given Buddhism. That is all right for them.' That was their attitude.

But you could really see the joy of those people at being allowed to listen to the sort of thing that previously they had been completely shut off from. There were, admittedly, during the Hindu middle ages, some mystics and teachers who did try to teach some at least of the Untouchables and circulate among them, but nothing very much came of it. Society was too strong for them.

So we can see quite easily, from instances of this sort, what the Buddha himself was up against, the sort of opposition he had to face from the brahmins. And, of course, in a country like India, choking up the well is a particularly mean sort of thing to do, and against all traditions of hospitality, anyway.

ABC: They must have been choking their own well.

S: They must have been, there must have been only that one well. But they thought he would at least go away after a while, and then they could unchoke it, presumably. Or maybe they stored up a bit of water beforehand.

But what about that verse? It goes off at a bit of a tangent. 'What should one do with a well, when water's everywhere?' What do you think is meant by water being everywhere?

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: Perhaps spiritual truth.

S: Mmm; but is spiritual truth everywhere? In what sense is it everywhere? I think one has to be a bit careful here of pseudo-Zen creeping in, or pseudo-Vedanta. For the Buddha, water is everywhere. In other words, since he is Enlightened, he as it were takes his Enlightened mind with him everywhere. He doesn't have to have recourse to any particular practice, any particular teaching. For him, the water is everywhere. The well is like a source of spiritual truth, a particular source, a finite source if you like. It is a bit like the Zen idiom of selling water by the river; you could say having a well by the river, or sinking a well right next to the river. So someone who has the river, i.e. the source of spiritual truth, within himself, does not need a well. He does not need to get it from here or there. So the Buddha, being Enlightened, had as it were an inexhaustible source of spiritual truth, Enlightenment, wisdom, compassion, within himself, so did not need to seek any of those things from any other source. So 'What should one do with a well, when water's everywhere?' He is himself the ocean now. He does not need to go looking for a well. What use would a well be to him? He has himself become the water, as it were. So, in the same way, and with much the same sort of meaning: 'What should one go a-seeking, when craving's cut at the root?' If you have no craving, you have gained Nirvana, you have gained Enlightenment. Once you have gained Enlightenment, what else is there for you to seek? Or you could also say, changing the metaphor a bit, once you have reached the further shore, what do you need with a raft? What use do you have for a raft? As I said, the verse goes off at a bit of a tangent.

So one could say that the Scriptures, particular practices, methods, exercises, and so on, these are all like the well. When one has an abundance of water, as it were, within oneself, an abundance of spiritual truth, one doesn't need to have recourse to a well.

But of course there is also the implication that, when water is not everywhere, when in fact you don't have any water at your disposal at all, then you certainly do need a well. And the water being everywhere shouldn't be just an idea or a concept; it should be something that you actually experience, otherwise you become like the pseudo-Zen person who says: 'Truth is everywhere: what need is there to study books? I'm the Buddha; what need have I to follow any particular practices or methods?' But that's just words. So one should make sure that the water actually is everywhere, it's not just talking about water being everywhere; because if it isn't everywhere, you do need a well, so the sooner you find one the better.

Any query or comment on all that? (Silence.)

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying at Kosambi, in Ghosita Park. Now on that occasion the harem of the Rajah Udena, who had gone out to the garden, caught fire, and five hundred women came to their end, chief of them being Samavati.

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Then a great number of monks ... came to the Exalted One, and seated at one side said: 'Here, sir, the harem of the Rajah Udena ... caught fire.' ... and asked him, 'Pray, sir, what is the bourn, what the future lot of those woman-disciples?'

'Monks, among these some woman-disciples are stream-winners, some once-returners, some non-returners. Not fruitless, monks, are all those woman-disciples who have met their end.'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Bound to illusion is the world: Bound-to-become 'tis seen to be. Bound to a basis is the fool
And accompanied with darkness. Yet He seems eternal. But of him Who seeth clearly naught
remains."

S: The udana doesn't seem to have a very close connection with the episode, but perhaps it doesn't matter very much. Kosambi is the present-day Allahabad, which is a quite important town in north central India.

It is quite interesting that, among the women of the harem of Rajah Udena, there were some who were stream-winners, some once-returners, some non-returners. How do you think that was? How do you think that came about?

: They had plenty of time to ...

S: They had plenty of time, yes. Some of these rajahs had harems consisting of hundreds of women. Some of them didn't see the rajah from one year's end to the next, so they had plenty of time. They were looked after, they were maintained, if not in luxury certainly in comfort. They had no husband to look after; the rajah was no doubt looked after by his servants, or perhaps only some of the harem ladies were on duty at any one time; so they had plenty of time. So some of the more serious-minded, no doubt, took up religious practices, and

practised meditation. Some, we know, were disciples of the Buddha. So, in those very propitious circumstances, it wasn't very difficult for them to attain a quite considerable degree of spiritual development. Some of the harem ladies might have been just nominally concubines of the king. Some kings kept up large harems, not because they particularly wanted to or were particularly addicted to women but just for the sake of prestige, just as a king might keep up 10 or 20 or 30 palaces. He can't live in them all; some of them he might not even see in the whole course of his reign. So, in much the same way, he would keep up the prescribed number of women, just like his predecessors, but most of them he might not even see. We know this was the case with the emperors of China, who traditionally kept 3,000 concubines, and quite a large number of them never even saw him, they were just honorary concubines, just kept for reasons of prestige, so they had plenty of time. Chinese concubines used to write poetry, it seems. But Indian concubines, being Indian, tended more to take up religion, it appears. This seems to have been so even in the Buddha's day. So we have to look at these things not in accordance with modern prejudices but according [450] to the conditions and ideas of the time; and to be a concubine in the harem of a king, or even a nobleman, was often considered a quite honourable career.

I remember when I was in Kalimpong, one of my students said to me one day that living down the road, on holiday from Nepal, was one of the queens of Nepal. This is the form in which it reached me. So I was quite interested, so I pursued the matter with him, and it turned out that she was one of the concubines of one of the Ranas of Nepal. She had just come on a holiday to visit her relations. She was only a village girl, but she was certainly very highly regarded in the village, and people were quite pleased that she had come, because she was a concubine in the palace of one of the more prominent Ranas. And there were probably several hundred others, or at least a few dozen. But there was certainly no question of looking down on her as might be the case in the West in similar circumstances. She just had a quite respectable position. So perhaps it was a bit like that, it was all very respectable, not to say even staid! You lived in the rajah's palace, you were nominally married to him in some sort of tenuous way, you saw him occasionally, and that was about all. You were looked after, you didn't have to bother about food and clothing, and you could get on with whatever you were interested in. So no doubt some of the palace ladies, some of the harem ladies, did embroidery, others just gossiped, and others perhaps just got on with their religious practices. So, for the religious-minded woman, it was almost an ideal environment. There was no temptation in the form of men, there was only the king; and you only saw him once or twice a year. So it was almost like a monastery - almost like a nunnery, you could even say. So no wonder some of them became stream winners and once-returners and non-returners, and so on. And the Buddha apparently was quite aware of this.

There is one interesting little point. When the Buddha says, 'Not fruitless, monks, are all those woman-disciples who have met their end.' There is a footnote by the translator which says: 'Text strangely reads neuter plurals' - in other words, not feminine plurals but neuter plurals. But why 'strangely'? Why do you think the Buddha referred to them in neuter plurals, not feminine plurals?

: They had transcended sexual differences.

S: Right, yes. It is quite significant that the translator seems to have completely missed that. All the Indian languages inflect their verbs according to the sex of the speaker. There is an interesting little anecdote in this connection which you will find in my memoirs when they

come out. When I was in Nepal, the friend who was travelling with me then, who was also a Buddhist monk, was very concerned, not to say upset and annoyed, that a Nepalese nun who was cooking our meals - an anagarika, not a full nun, but living like a nun - she used to speak Hindi with us, but not knowing it very well she used the verbal forms which were appropriate to a male speaker, which sounds quite odd. So he kept correcting her. And one day she got really annoyed and fed up with this, and she said to him, 'Now that I have become a nun, there shouldn't be any question of masculine and feminine. It doesn't matter whether I use masculine verbs or feminine verbs!' So after that he didn't say very much. But the Buddha seems to have made this point very deliberately - that they had transcended the distinction of sex by becoming stream-winners, once-returners [451] and non-returners. They could be reckoned as just individuals. So that is quite an important point.

Subhuti: Presumably there is normally a masculine inflection?

S: There is a masculine, a feminine and a neuter.

Subhuti: I mean when (those terms) are applied to male disciples?

S: Yes. This raises the interesting question of the extent to which the true individual is sexless, or in what sense.

ABC: That both sides have been integrated.

S: Yes, but what are those two sides?

ABC: Well, masculine and feminine.

S: Yes, but what does one exactly mean by that? I mean, I know there is a lot of talk about this and around this, but what does it really mean? When people talk about their masculine side and their feminine side, what do they really mean by it? I am becoming rather puzzled about this. Can anyone shed any light?

ABC: It's not in the generally accepted (sense of) masculine and feminine sides. I suppose it's more like wisdom and compassion.

S: But do you think wisdom is particularly masculine or compassion particularly masculine?

ABC: Well, they're not - both can manifest in male and female.

S: So in what sense does one speak of one as masculine and the other feminine? Is it in any literal sense, or in a purely symbolical sense?

ABC: Sort of biological.

S: I mean, if you can't really speak of wisdom as masculine and compassion as feminine, or vice versa, then presumably you speak of wisdom as masculine or feminine, and compassion as masculine or feminine, in a purely symbolical manner, not having in mind actual sexual gender at all. So, in that case, in what sense does one speak of an integration of masculine and feminine as constituting, or at least helping to constitute, individuality?

Devaraja: Perhaps it is more that the person's individuality, as such, is foremost; that consideration of them as a man or a woman is thus quite superfluous or trivial, in a way.

S: When you say 'consideration of them' as a man or as a woman, what do you mean?

Devaraja: Well, one's response to them is not - there is not a sort of biological response, so to speak. They are functioning so intensely as an individual that they no longer function, say, as a member of the species in a sexual function. I don't know if I'm being very clear.

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S: I see what you're getting at, but it's getting away from this question of in what sense one speaks of an integration of masculine and feminine as being at least an aspect of individuality.

Devaraja: Well, usually the stock thing is that the person - I feel it's a little too facile, in a way - the stock thing is that there is an integration of, say, emotion and intellect and intuition ...

S: I think this is really much too facile. Because it suggests that women have no intelligence or reason and men have no emotions or feelings; which is probably completely wrong. So what does one mean by integrating masculine and feminine within oneself, so as to help oneself be an individual? I ask this because there is such a lot of talk about this and around this. It is very current coin, as it were. You hear people say, 'I guess I should develop my feminine side more,' or something like that. You hear it very often, don't you? So what does one mean by that?

: In Jungian terminology (it would) be symbolic for the conscious and the unconscious of the respective sexes. He talks about anima and animus. I'm not sure whether that really answers the question; it rather assumes it.

: Some of this ties up with intellect and intuition.

Sagaramati: And projection, that's another thing that comes into it. You project your female side on to women.

S: But, first of all, have you got a female side? What do you mean by that female side? And also what do you mean by projection?

Subhuti: Those energies and faculties which are generally called either masculine or feminine, and which are to some extent opposed to each other, such as for instance emotion and intellect or intuition and reason, are developed more if there is any lack of them in you, and to the extent that there is already both of them, they come more into harmony with each other and they are both expanded and refined until they are as it were unified with each other. Or, in other words, all your energies, whether they were hitherto called masculine or feminine, are available to you.

S: Well, that's fine, that's clear enough. But then, for what reason, or what is the basis, for one associating one side with masculine and one side with feminine? Or is it a purely abstract label that has got, as such, no significance at all? One can certainly understand harmonizing reason and emotion within oneself, but why does one call, for instance, reason masculine and emotion feminine, and speak in terms of integrating masculine and feminine within oneself?

What sense has that got?

: In our basic sexual symbolism, the male is the active member and the female is the passive. That is the general category for active qualities and passive qualities.

S: Though, again, men are not always active nor are women always passive.

: In the sexual role this kind of symbolism at the basic level seems to be very appropriate.

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Devaraja: I don't think it is used quite in those terms, masculine and feminine, in traditional Buddhism. There's the wisdom and compassion thing, but I don't think that really is used in the same way.

S: It doesn't seem to tie up with physiological sex at all. And, in any case, it is the male figure that embodies compassion and the female one wisdom!

Subhuti: Well, perhaps you could call unification ceasing to regard certain aspects of yourself as feminine and therefore not really part of you. Or vice versa, as the case may be.

S: Ah. It seems to me that this whole talk of masculine and feminine in this connection just drags a great big red herring across the trail. If you simply talk in terms of integrating the rational and intuitive, the intellectual and the emotional, the active and the passive within yourself, recognizing that one may be a bit overdeveloped and another a bit underdeveloped, and you want to equalize and harmonize the two, without bringing in any reference to masculine and feminine, there would seem to be no difficulty whatever. Everything would seem to be clear. Just as we talk in terms of harmonizing faith and understanding, or meditation and energy. But when you bring in masculine and feminine, it seems just to confuse the issue. So therefore in what sense is it said that the true individual is as it were neither masculine nor feminine?

Devaraja: I think in what I said before about their individuality being much, much stronger than any kind of biological consideration as ...

S: So it also ties up with what I have been saying: to the extent that you identify with your sexuality, whether as a male or a female, to that extent you are not an individual. So it's as though you shouldn't so much speak in terms of the individual harmonizing masculine and feminine as such, so much as transcending the distinction and being neither masculine nor feminine, in a sexual sense at least, but just an individual. You get a lot of loose thinking on this sort of subject, or when this sort of terminology is used. I am beginning to think it would be better to drop it altogether.

Devaraja: I think it creates confusions in people's practice, because they identify sort of wishy-washiness with feminine, and a kind of hirsute camaraderie with being masculine.

Colin: Isn't that a thing that you're just conditioned into? There's a generally accepted sort of thing that's masculine and a generally accepted feminine thing.

S: Well, probably it would be correct to say that there are certain characteristics which

women exhibit more prominently than men, on the whole. But to recognize that fact is quite different from the sort of thing that we have been talking about. In fact, there may not be a question of complementariness, even.

Subhuti: Perhaps it is an example of what you said about brahminism taking hold of the language of Buddhism and reducing it to a lower level, so that - it's not particularly appropriate to say, when you're attempting to [454] blend wisdom and compassion, say, that you are putting it in terms of combining masculine and feminine, any more than to say that when you are having sex you are blending wisdom and compassion.

S: This is the great danger, because people do actually start thinking in this sort of way, as you can see in America. They use now the expression 'Tantric yoga' for simply anything to do with sex: you know, when you're just having sexual intercourse with somebody you are blending wisdom and compassion, and you're practising Enlightenment, as it were. That's the other way round that it is worked. So I think it's probably better to keep masculine and feminine out of it altogether, as regards language in this sort of way, and just concentrate on being an individual and developing all skilful aspects of yourself to the full, and in harmony, and not think that such-and-such aspect is masculine and such-and-such is feminine. If you go on to the level of true individuality, the distinction of masculine and feminine loses much of its significance, anyway.

: You have been using that terminology in one of the lectures on the Bodhisattva Ideal in terms of kshanti and virya.

S: Yes, right. But you also notice that I put 'masculine' and 'feminine' in single inverted commas, and drew attention to the fact that I did so and said the distinction should not be taken at all literally. But perhaps from now onwards I shall stop doing even that! - because sometimes my inverted commas are forgotten or not noticed.

But does anyone still use this sort of language, or is it still used around the Centre - that 'I think I'd better develop my feminine side more,' or do women say 'I think I've got to develop my masculine side more'? Do we still have this sort of terminology?

: It's much rarer.

S: It's rarer. It used to be quite common. Or does anyone think in this sort of way?

Sona: Only to the extent of developing my masculine side!

Subhuti: Yes, it's sometimes used in that sense.

S: I think perhaps it isn't even wise to think in terms of 'develop my masculine side' rather than 'be a man'. It's not that you've got a masculine side: you are a man.

Devaraja: You've just got to wake up to the fact!

S: By heaven, you have! Some, anyway. And sometimes the femininity is invoked to excuse what is simply weakness and lack of manliness or strength or decisiveness, and certainly that sort of alleged femininity doesn't have anything to do with the actual qualities of women. It's

just a deficiency in ordinary manly capacity and capability and initiative and so on. But one tries to excuse it by saying, 'Oh, I'm developing my feminine side. I'm a bit more feminine than most men,' or 'I'm a bit more balanced,' as it were.

[455]

Devaraja: ... does really have an emotional possession, by quite infantile emotions.

: One could perhaps say that what men and women are commonly seen to be is a kind of stereotype image and that one has to avoid any kind of stereotype. One should not be bound by having to conform to any stereotype.

S: I think one has to be very careful, though, of becoming a bit woolly and refusing to recognize actually existent differences between men and women as such, quite apart from cultural conditioning and so on. Quite definitely, the average woman is different from the average man: on that level femininity is physiologically and emotionally, as it were, different from masculinity. I don't think you can reduce men and women to a sort of unisex, as it were. At the same time, there are certain activities and even qualities which are quite arbitrarily classified as either masculine or feminine. For instance, embroidery in our civilization is regarded as a typically feminine activity. But not so in Tibet: embroidery was always done by monks, it's a masculine activity. It started with embroidered thangkas and then got on to embroidered other things. It was always in the hands of the monks. So there embroidery is a masculine art or occupation, because the monks do it. But in the West, perhaps until recently, in some circles, if a man took up embroidery, he would be regarded as effeminate. But this is an example of a purely arbitrary classification of an occupation as feminine or masculine.

: I think the assumption is perpetuated by the education system, where you find in a girls' school they are taught embroidery and not woodwork.

S: But it does seem, at the same time, that boys and girls have certain distinctive interests, apart from any cultural conditioning. I have been watching this recently over the last few years in the case of the children of some of my friends. You sometimes hear that all differences of behaviour in small children are due to cultural conditioning. I think this is complete nonsense, and that even when parents most carefully refrain from conditioning and the children are brought up in comparative isolation, little boys seem to show the same determination to have guns and cannons and things, and little girls are much more interested in dolls. If you try to get the little girl interested in guns, she isn't. And the little boy usually isn't interested in dolls. This seems quite innate, not due to cultural conditioning. So I think one shouldn't go to the other extreme and say that they are just pure individuals, there is no difference between men and women except the obvious physiological ones, and everything else is the result of cultural conditioning. I don't think this can be justified, even though there are certain activities which are quite arbitrarily classified as either masculine or feminine. Because, at a later stage, if you don't recognize the distinctive, genuine characteristics of women and of men, then you get into difficulties when it comes to the question of spiritual development, spiritual practices, spiritual training. There may be certain approaches which are less suited to men than to women and vice versa, so you have to take into account their genuine differences without pandering to what are merely cultural prejudices.

You could say, with regard to the individual, that the individual [456] cannot be classified as strictly masculine or strictly feminine because the individual, to the extent that he is an

individual, transcends sexuality as such, and therefore tends not to function in that particular way; which would automatically differentiate him one way or the other. So if he doesn't function on that level in that way, he functions purely as a human being, purely as an individual. His activity is not bifurcated in that way. But as soon as you start functioning sexually, there is no question of masculine or feminine, just of humanity and individuality. So, in that way, you integrate the sexes by transcending sex.

: Yes, it's a sort of Middle Way.

S: Yes, a sort of Middle Way. Presumably you could, at a certain intermediate stage, be a developed individual to some extent, and still function in a reasonably healthy way through one particular sexual role or the other; but the more individual you become, the less you would tend to function in this way, and certainly the less you would be identified with that sort of functioning.

: You used the term 'sexual role' there. Was that perhaps quite ...

S: That was quite deliberate, yes! Because in a way it would be a role if you were a real individual; not something you identified yourself with, but just a particular way in which you functioned.

Subhuti: Isn't that exactly what you were saying a role wasn't? That people often use the word role when ...

S: No, what I mean is that, in your heart of hearts, you would not feel either masculine or feminine, but you would have only one particular type of apparatus through which to function. This is what I mean. So it's the apparatus which provides you with your role. The mere fact that you have become an individual does not automatically provide you with double apparatus!

Anyway, we have strayed rather a long way from the harem of Rajah Udena. Any further query on that episode before we go on to the actual udana?

It also quite definitely underlines the spiritual capacity of women, as individuals.

Subhuti: Perhaps it also indicates the conditions under which they can - (Laughter.)

S: There aren't many kings around nowadays.

Subhuti: Yes, I meant in a quite sheltered and supportive ...

S: Yes, sheltered, supported, and sort of pleasing environment - at least, for many women; even for quite a few men.

Colin: Would that be something to do with why the Buddha appeared to be reticent to ordain women?

S: I think so. Because he made it quite clear that there was no doubt about their capacity to gain Enlightenment. Ananda asked the straightforward [457] question, and he gave a quite

categorical reply which, so far as Buddhist tradition is concerned, settled the matter once and for all. But he was extremely reluctant to allow them to 'go forth' - not to Go for Refuge but to go forth as wanderers, as the men did. This he was reluctant to allow. But there is no question of his being reluctant to allow them to Go for Refuge or practise the Dharma, practise the Teaching, practise meditation. It was the particular lifestyle that he was unwilling to open to them, because of its special dangers for women. But he even emphasized the capacity of women to gain Enlightenment. Here again we find it being emphasized.

In Tibet, as I have mentioned before, there were not many nuns in the old days, and they tended to be of two kinds. In the first place, you had nuns who wandered around from place to place more or less like religious mendicants, and very often they were more mendicant than religious, and sometimes it was very difficult to distinguish them from ordinary beggars. But there were pious women, usually old women, who went around twirling their prayer wheels and begging for alms, maybe doing a bit of meditation, maybe not; but not highly regarded or anything of that sort. And then, you had a quite different sort of nun: the nun who came from a quite well-to-do family and who had a very definite interest in the spiritual life. Her parents would not allow her to go out wandering like the first kind of nun. This was considered, in the first place, not socially very respectable, and secondly, just too dangerous; and not the best arrangement for someone seriously interested in the spiritual life, certainly not for a woman. So what usually was done for a woman of that sort who wanted to be a nun was that the family would build, or provide for her, separate quarters. If they were really well-to-do, there would be a separate cottage for her in the compound of the main building, or at least separate apartments in the house; and she lived quite separately from everybody else, in complete seclusion. They would arrange for some very worthy elderly lama to visit her once or twice a week or even every day to give her instruction and teaching. And they would support her and would also make offerings to him, and she would be freed from all domestic responsibilities and enabled to get on full time, virtually, with her spiritual studies and practices. And she would be ordained, very often; not as a bhikkhuni because the bhikkhuni tradition was not introduced into Tibet, but certainly as a novice nun. And even after her ordination, she would continue living at home, as it were, in that way, and she could live like that all her life, being looked after either by her parents or her brothers and sisters or her nephews and nieces or other members of the family. People would be quite pleased to have a nun living in that way on the premises. I have been told that women living like this at home as nuns often made very good progress, and their parents were often careful to get them very good teachers; and they could live quite genuinely as nuns in this way.

There were nunneries of nuns, but very few indeed. The majority of real nuns seem to have been of this kind. This ties up with what Subhuti said about women perhaps needing to be a bit looked after and provided with a rather sheltered environment while they got on with their spiritual practice. Of course, there will be the odd spiritual Amazon or spiritual virago who can do whatever a man does, but they are probably comparatively rare.

All right, what about the udana?

[458]

'Bound to illusion is the world: Bound-to-become 'tis seen to be. Bound to a basis is the fool
And companied with darkness. Yet He seems eternal. But of him Who seeth clearly naught
remains.'

A quite general sort of verse. 'Bound to illusion is the world, / Bound-to-become 'tis seen to be.' It is bound to go on just changing. The Wheel of Life is bound to go on just turning. And 'Bound to a basis is the fool'. The basis presumably is ignorance, which underlies all the thoughts and words and actions of the spiritually immature person. 'And companied with darkness.' That is just a metaphorical extension of the statement. 'Yet / He seems eternal.' That is, he seems, the spiritually immature person, seems to himself, and maybe to others like him, as though he is just going to go on and on for ever. 'But of him / Who seeth clearly naught remains.' What do you think that means? The one who sees clearly is the one who has developed Insight and Wisdom, so that nothing remains of him, in the sense of nothing conditioned remains. All unskilful thoughts have withered away.

There is also an important point that we didn't touch upon. Among those women, there are stream-winners, once-returners, non-returners, but no arhants. Why do you think that is? Do you think it was simply because there just were none, or is there a definite reason for there not being any?

Sagaramati: Do you have to be born as a man to become one?

S: No, there are woman arhants mentioned in the Scriptures.

Subhuti: It couldn't be a later tradition that only bhikkhus and bhikkhunis could be arhants?

S: You are getting a bit close to it, in a way. It depends also what you mean by bhikkhus and bhikkhunis.

Subhuti: Ordained, in the later monastic sense.

S: Not even that. The original idea or feeling seems to have been that you could go so far along the spiritual path, even quite a long way, and still remain a layman in the technical sense, but when you became an arhant, when you became fully Enlightened, as it were, no compromise was possible. You just had to give up the 'lay' way of life. Which didn't mean that you just became a monk in the purely external, technical, ecclesiastical sense, but once you became an arhant, once you became fully Enlightened, you could not but lead a spiritual life not only internally but also externally. So the mere fact that the harem women were harem women, living the lay life, in however refined a way, meant that they could not have been arhants. There might have been women among them who became arhants; but they would at once have left; not because the harem was a particularly bad place or anything like that, but because they would have wanted to be completely free, completely dissociated from lay life.

Of course, you mustn't take this too literally, because in the Indian middle ages, when Buddhist monastic life had become very highly organized, when you became Enlightened you left the monastery. You became a yogi. [459] Some of the Tantric siddhas were like this. Monastic life had become a sort of celibate lay life, so once they became Enlightened they just couldn't live that sort of life any longer, they just went roaming around, just as the bhikkhus had in the old days. But the important point is that, once you reach a certain point of spiritual development, a really high point, and perhaps the highest point of all, there are certain things that you just can't do and as it were won't do any more.

So if any of those harem women had reached that point, that realization would have blown

them right out of the harem and they would have been wandering around. They wouldn't have remained in the harem. Just as, had they been men, living and working at home, when they gained arhantship they would just not have been able to carry on.

Now later Buddhism, even in the Pali Scriptures, expresses this in a very quaint way, which has been the basis of much misunderstanding: that, when you become an arhant, if you are not already a bhikkhu, a monk, you at once become a monk - if necessarily, miraculously. There are several incidents where a layman becomes an arhant, and at once, as he becomes an arhant, the yellow robe appears on him, his hair disappears, and his begging bowl appears in his hand - and he is a monk. But though it is put in this very simple-minded, literal way, there is a truth behind it: not that he becomes a monk in the formal, technical, external, ecclesiastical sense, but that when he becomes fully Enlightened this must show itself in a change of lifestyle.

ABC: Can this be taken the other way - that if you fully give up the lay life, the worldly life, anybody can become an arhant?

S: Not necessarily, no. Because you could very carefully refrain from doing all the things that laymen are supposed to do, but still not be an arhant at all. Though it might well help you, if you were sincere; it would a little bit work the other way round, but not completely; you couldn't guarantee that, if you made a list of all the things that laymen do and then stopped doing them one by one, you would become an arhant. No. But certainly, by giving up certain practices or observances or habits which are roughly speaking the practices and habits of the layman, yes, you might well have a more skilful mental state as a result of that. But it wouldn't be much more than just a more skilful mental state. You certainly wouldn't become an arhant automatically, however much you gave up the practices and habits of the lay life.

Sona: What amazes me about this is that there seem to be so many arhants in the early Pali Canon.

S: It's really encouraging.

Sona: I remember, on the Suzuki seminar, you were saying - I think how very few Enlightened beings there are.

S: Well, few compared with the total population. But even if we add up all the arhants in the Pali Scriptures, probably there aren't more than 200 or 300, I would guess. Even if you've got 500, that isn't many compared with the total population.

Sona: But, compared with the population then, it's a tremendous number.

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S: Well, there was this tremendous outburst of spiritual energy, which was the beginnings of Buddhism, as it were. But perhaps we mustn't always take the word arhant too literally. It means someone worthy, someone spiritually advanced; perhaps not always necessarily someone who has literally gained Nirvana in the fullest and highest sense.

But this is quite an important point, though it has been given a slightly comic expression - that, when you become fully Enlightened, you cannot live in the way that a layman lives.

Which does not mean that you cannot live without a technical ordination as a monk, but that certain practices, certain habits, certain observances, you just can't be involved with any more. If you were engaged in business before you became an arhant, you might have been able to tell the odd little white lie and so on, but once you become an arhant that is impossible, so you just have to give up business; it all comes to an end. You just can't do it any more.

So one can even say that this sort of thing happens even at lower levels. As a result of a change of mental attitude, you feel compelled to change your actual external way of life; there are certain things you just can't be involved with any more, certain things you just don't want to do, that you're not interested in any longer. Before you got into meditation, and so on, you might have really liked going to parties every weekend, but once you really got into your meditation, you get satisfaction from that; you just don't feel like going to parties any more. You just can't. If by accident you found yourself in the midst of a party, you would just have to leave at once, you just couldn't bear to be there. So it's rather like that. Except that it's not just the party, it's the whole of the as-it-were worldly life - though, at the same time, one mustn't make too formal a distinction between the secular, or the worldly, and the so-called religious. It is not that you, from then onwards, can only occupy yourself with technically religious activities. It isn't really like that at all, though it is quite often looked at in that way. It raises, even, the question of 'What is worldly? What is religious?' You can be technically a monk but really busy with all sorts of worldly things - you know, running some thriving pilgrimage centre, or something of that sort; which is sometimes perhaps no more than just a business, though maybe a comparatively innocent one.

In fact, we may say it is quite important that these changes of lifestyle and external practices and ways of behaviour do change. If no change takes place, then it is doubtful whether anything is really happening inside. This is one of the things that I really did notice originally, when I came back first to England - I think I have mentioned this more than once that English Buddhists seemed no different from other English people. They just went along to the Society or the Vihara once a week, or at most twice a week, just like other people went to church on Sundays. But there was no other difference. A very few were vegetarians - most were not even vegetarians. They lived in exactly the same middle-class way as other people. And this really struck me. So I concluded that there was very little in terms of actual belief in the Buddha's teaching, even, not to speak of practice, or Insight; very little of real faith. And even the suggestion that people should change or might change or could change was not always very happily received. In fact, some people even said quite strongly that English Buddhists should try to be as like other English people as possible - if anything, more English than they were. I don't mean in a sort of cultural sense, that they should get into Blake, [461] or anything of that sort - but that they should be just as conventional, have the same sort of cars and watch the same sort of TV programmes and have the same sort of jobs and the same sort of houses. The only difference was that they would be Buddhists. So when I suggested, or started suggesting, otherwise, people were quite surprised and quite resistant. This is one reason why we eventually started up our own new Movement. But there must be some external change. If there isn't, it's very surprising and even suspect. You can hardly have a bowler-hatted Buddha, complete with little umbrella. Anything further on all that? (Silence.) Well, have people got any general ideas about what changes would take place - or what changes you think might have taken place, or have even taken place, as one gets more and more deeply into this whole question of individual development and Higher Evolution? What would be, say, typical changes? Or even atypical changes?

Devaraja: Simplification of lifestyle.

S: What do you mean by that, exactly?

Devaraja: Well, I mean that people need less money, they live in a simpler way, they accumulate less around them. Their actual daily programme becomes simpler. Fewer possessions.

S: It is said of the arhant that he finds it difficult to possess anything, apart from his bowl and robes. Certainly that is one: simplification of life and fewer possessions. Any others? Sona: Not taking life - being a vegetarian.

S: At least being a vegetarian, yes.

Sagaramati: If you had had political views, they would no longer be dependent on the way you were brought up. You would be seeing it in a much clearer fashion.

S: Right, yes.

: One's friends: increasingly one would only be able to have relationships with people on a similar path.

S: Yes. This is something which quite a lot of people find. But also, obviously, it gives rise to difficulties, and quite a lot of heart-searching and even heartache sometimes; because you may be quite reluctant to recognize the fact that the old friends can no longer be friends, in fact. You try to keep up the friendship, but very often it seems very mechanical and unreal. Nothing in it any more. And this is sometimes even quite saddening, but you just have to recognize the fact.

Devaraja: I met somebody after seven years. He'd just come back from living in Hong Kong and Malaysia and the Philippines all that time. The first time I'd gone up towards India I went with this guy, who was my best friend then. But he came back and he was treating me in exactly the same way as if the seven years hadn't elapsed, and it was really quite strange, really very unpleasant. [462] S: He was just where he was, and he couldn't see that you were no longer where you were seven years earlier?

Devaraja: Well, he could see there were differences - he said I'd become quieter and more serious!

S: He probably attributed that simply to old age!

Subhuti: Getting a bit past it! (Laughter.)

Devaraja: But he was the same, but just more aggressively so!

Sona: It certainly seems as though people don't change unless they are purposely making an effort to. Unless something has happened in ...

S: Well, they certainly don't change in any real way.

: They just seem to consolidate, don't they?

S: Yes, consolidate around the old centre. Any other manifestations of inner change? What about work - I mean, work in the sense of job, Right Livelihood? What about alcohol? (Embarrassed laughter.)

Sagaramati: You certainly can't drink as much as you used to.

ABC: You get a headache after half a pint.

S: What about the sense of security?

ABC: ... confidence.

S: I mean in the sense that originally one does a lot of things and collects a lot of things and builds up a lot of things, just to provide oneself with a certain security for the morrow, and so on. But once one has evolved beyond a certain point, as it were, one doesn't feel the need for that sort of security any more. For many people, job is security - the fact that you can look forward to 40 years of uninterrupted employment, with a pension at the end. And the majority of people in the West seem to think in those terms.

Devaraja: What you are saying about security and collecting possessions I find quite interesting, because in a way the opposite has happened for me. I feel insecure now when I've got too many possessions. I get this feeling of these things are building up round me and they're weighing me down, almost like a physical weight.

S: That's not insecurity, exactly.

Devaraja: Well, they're a threat.

S: Well, you're bothered by them, your freedom of action is limited by them. (Pause.)

Subhuti: Emotions.

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S: Emotions, mm. How would that manifest itself externally, that particular kind of change?

: Lighter and ...

S: You look happier all the time. Also probably you don't stand so much in need of entertainment - in other words, distraction. William James used to say: 'A difference must make a difference' - in other words, to be a difference at all, a theoretical difference has to have a practical corollary, otherwise the distinction or difference is quite unreal - it doesn't even exist theoretically. So a difference must make a difference.

Devaraja: What you were saying about alcohol, too - that applies to dope and things like that. I think that the mental states associated with that, which used to be pleasurable, become highly uncomfortable and very unpleasant.

S: Quite. Well, that probably applies even to things like sweets. What about one's attitude towards food - leaving aside the question of vegetarianism? What would one expect the difference or the change to be, apart from eating less of the stuff? (Laughter.) One would become more aware, I suppose, more selective, more discriminating - though not in a sort of gourmet way, exactly. (Embarrassed laughter.) One would be quite happy whatever one had to eat, apart from the question of vegetarianism. You could enjoy a dry crust of bread just as much as a beautifully prepared curry. If only a crust of bread was available, you would be quite happy and content with that.

: Surprising, you usually ... S: I didn't mean just you, I meant ...

Sona: That's good, 'cause that's all we've got for supper. : Oh, good!

S: With water? (Laughter throughout this.)

Also, I suppose, the whole question of violence. You could no longer act violently.

Colin: Connected with that, something I've noticed is I don't swear any more.

S: Oh! You mean you don't swear or you don't even feel like swearing?

Colin: I don't even feel like swearing.

S: Well, why do you think that is? What sort of mental change does that represent?

Colin: Well, I think just sort of feeling less aggressive.

S: Perhaps your aggression tended to come out just in that way. [464] Colin (after pause): I'm not sure. I think a lot of the time perhaps it was something tacked on - do you know what I mean?

S: What tacked on to what?

Colin: Well, the thing of bad language is a sort of assumed aggressiveness.

S: Assumed masculinity?

Colin: Yeah!

S: A point I've raised sometimes before, and it is quite interesting, is that it is only Christianity as compared with the Eastern religions that we get such a thing as blasphemy. Have you ever thought about this? (Voice: Yes.) Has anyone heard me mention this before? So first of all, what is blasphemy?

Sagaramati: Taking the name of God in vain.

S: Or using it for improper purposes, as it were. But why do you think that this sort of thing happens in the context of Christianity, but you don't get it in Buddhist countries ever? You just never hear this. Or even in Hindu lands. Why is this, do you think?

: Because - it doesn't sound right, does, it, to say, 'Oh, Buddha!'

S: But why can you use those sort of expletives within a Christian context? Or why did you, even? Some Buddhists go on, even after becoming Buddhists - they are still using the old Christian expletives but they would never dream of using Buddhist equivalents of those expletives or expressions, would they?

: I think it may have something to do with the crucifixion.

S: No, I don't think it has, actually.

: It's because one is threatened. You want to (express) defiance.

S: One is threatened, yes. You want to get back at God, this is what it really means. So why do you want to get back at God? You experience God as repressive and threatening. But you don't experience the Buddha like that, presumably, or Buddhism itself. It is not experienced as sort of repressive and threatening and overwhelming, and you do not have unconscious resentment towards it, therefore. One can say that blasphemy and similar manifestations are all expressions of unconscious resentment - just resentment - against the religion in which you are supposed to believe, and especially when belief is strongly insisted on, and 'Thou shalt not do this' and 'Thou shalt not do that', and if you dare to misbelieve, if you dare to believe in the wrong way, you are going to be damned, God is going to damn you - you know, to roast you in hell for ever and ever; and he is really going to enjoy doing this, even! So this must give rise [465] to a lot of resentment in a lot of people, and this is the way it finds its expression. Even pious Catholics, apparently, in Catholic countries, use all sorts of bizarre expletives and expressions of this kind. The favourite one in Italy is said to be 'Pig of a Madonna!' - they use it all the time. But pious Catholics (say it) - and they go and offer some flowers and light a candle in front of her statue. So it is quite natural that, as you get into spiritual development and Higher Evolution in the Buddhist sense of those terms, things like blasphemy and bad language and undesirable expletives and so on just drop away. It means that you don't have that sort of resentment any longer. You don't experience the spiritual ideal as something repressive or threatening, but more something encouraging and helpful and kindly.

But one should really think about things like this, because they are quite telltale in a way. I suspect there may be a bit of blasphemy in Islam; I suspect. But certainly not in Buddhism, certainly not in Hinduism, not in Taoism, as far as I know. Animists, I think, don't blaspheme, or simple tribal people with their own particular faith and cult; they don't blaspheme. It is only Western Christians. And also you read in the lives of many Christian saints that, at a certain stage, they were really going through it, and one of the great temptations they had to face, one of the great trials, was an uncontrollable impulse to blaspheme. So that even quite holy men would be screaming out wild blasphemies against God and obscenities against God, and they just couldn't understand it. This happened in the lives of many Christian saints. And some of them had this temptation to blasphemy all through their career and they just couldn't understand it. So what do you think it meant?

: They just felt repressed.

S: They just felt repressed. There was something in them of which they were unconscious that

was just being held down by force and resented it. And they sometimes thought the devil was possessing them, and the devil was screaming these blasphemies and obscenities. And in a sense they were right, but it was their own devil.

Subhuti: In a sense, you could say that the devil is a kind of projection of this repression.

S: Yes, right. If you repress something within yourself, it becomes a devil. Repression is not the same as conscious control, or conscious keeping within bounds. But that is quite significant: as far as I know, you get absolutely nothing of this in the Buddhist tradition. So it means this directly springs from the very strictly .?..istic and authoritarian and paternalistic structure of orthodox Christianity, and all those who have been brought up in the West, even without being actually brought up as Christians, are affected by this to some extent. You look upon religion or spiritual things as somehow repressive, not letting you do what you want to do - not as something encouraging you by having a kindly attitude towards you. The religious or the spiritual is often experienced or thought of as something hostile, unfriendly, unsympathetic, threatening. So there is something in you, however good you may be, which feels very resentful even at having to be good. There is an interesting story I was told by some of my Thai bhikkhu friends, which is not exactly what I've been talking about but allied to it. Some of the Thai bhikkhus, when they came to India, were going [466] around with me among the ex-Untouchables, and they were quite surprised and sometimes a little hurt when children wouldn't come to them, because they were quite friendly and well-disposed towards small children; but when they spoke to the Hindu children or called to them, the children ran away in terror. And they couldn't understand this, because they said in Thailand children always came to them. So we talked about it and we worked it out. In India, the Hindu mother scolds the child by saying, 'If you're not a good boy the sadhu baba will take you away.' Because very often, sadhus of the lower or less reputable type - not much better than beggars - steal children, and there are many stories about children being stolen, and they make them their disciples and servants and so on. Quite a bit of this goes on, children are often kidnapped by wandering sadhus. So if the child is naughty, the mother says, 'If you're naughty, the sadhu baba will take you away. He will steal you,' or they say, 'I shall give you to the sadhu baba, and let him take you away.' So the child becomes afraid of the sadhus. In Thailand, on the other hand, if the child is naughty, the mother says, 'If you're naughty we won't take you to the vihara. We won't take you to see the bhikkhus. We'll only take you if you're good.' So the children always want to go to the vihara. And also these monks said that the monks not having any children of their own, are always very kind to the children, they like children, so if any children come to the vihara they will usually play with them or amuse them or give them sweets. So the children like going to the vihara, they like being with the monks. In this way, especially in the case of boys, they develop a real liking for the monastery and the monks' company, and prefer it to home, and that is how some boys become monks. It is always so pleasant when they go to the monastery, the monks are so kind; much kinder than their parents. Monks never punish them and never strike them, and in Theravada Buddhist monasteries they never use corporal punishment, even if the little samaneras are only eight or nine or ten years of age; they never strike them, it is quite unknown. They never speak harshly to them, even; always treat them kindly. So the result is that little boys often think of the monastery as a sort of paradise, where they are never beaten, never scolded and do whatever they please. So many of them, as they get a bit older, just want to stay there all the time, and they say to the parents, 'No, I want to be with the monks, I want to become a monk myself.' And in this way it develops. And sometimes they do become very good monks, just in this sort of way. They feel so happy in the monastery. But this is quite different from the usual

Christian approach to religion. Therefore, these monks made the point to me that, in the Theravada countries, people feel very positive towards the religion and towards the monks, and very happy when they go to the monastery. It is a very joyful thing for them. So this gives them a completely different orientation towards the spiritual tradition. Even though they may not themselves actually be practising it very much, they have got a very positive attitude towards it, and it means something very positive to them and for them. So in these circumstances you can't imagine any temptation to blasphemy. And the Buddha is the great golden figure who is presiding over all this. He is just there in the background, or somewhere around. He is just some benign, fatherly figure in a very positive sense. The monks are all Sons of the Buddha; the Buddha is some very kindly sort of grandfatherlike figure. That's how children and ordinary people grow up feeling about Buddhism and about the monks and about the Buddha; not anything at all [467] threatening or repressive. But when we go into it all, when we even study the life of the Theravada bhikkhu, we tend to think, 'He gives up this and he gives up that, and he can't do this and he can't do that.' But they themselves very rarely experience it like that at all. They think of it as a happy life - how happy the monk is. And I noticed when I was in Calcutta, meeting lots of Buddhists from all over the Buddhist world, including many monks, the monks were always happier looking than the laymen. It was really quite surprising and in a way amusing; that monks were supposed to have given up everything and to be leading very ascetic, hard lives, but they were noticeably more happy than the layfolk who came with their wives and families and possessions and money. The monks didn't have anything of that sort and were looked after by the laypeople and their expenses paid. They were just like schoolboys on a holiday: everything done for them, everything arranged. And there were the poor laypeople shouldering all the responsibility. So in the East, in Theravada Buddhist countries and even elsewhere, the monk's life is a very happy life. People certainly don't think of it as a life of asceticism and self-denial - even though, actually, the monks are leading a very much simpler life than that of the laypeople. For instance, Theravada monks never eat after 12 o'clock - the majority of them don't. And certainly they have no wives or families or anything of that sort, and most of them have very little money, just a bare pittance. And they are very happy, just getting on with their studies, and some of them meditate; but even if they don't meditate or don't do much in the way of study they are leading a happy, carefree life. They are noticeably more friendly and kindly, usually, than the laypeople. So, a different image of religion, this is what I'm getting at. So there isn't that sort of reaction. You may not be practising it and you may not be a very good Buddhist - you may be quite slothful and lazy, but you're not against it, you feel positively about it when you think at all. It is a positive influence in your environment and your life, however diluted and however distant. It isn't anything that you feel a need to rebel against, or that makes you feel guilty. Monks never tell people how wicked they are for not observing the Precepts - even though they may know that certain people are not observing the Precepts; but they don't take them to task in the way that a Christian pastor might; they never denounce them or anything of that sort. That is quite unknown. They won't say anything to the person, usually, individually, but they may just refer to certain things in a general way when they give their discourse. But they will never be very heavy with any individual. So people feel the influence of Buddhism as a sort of kindly atmosphere in which they can grow if they want to grow. That is very much the general attitude. Any query on all that? That was a little concluding poetic flight, as it were. It is also partly for purely practical reasons - that tomorrow being our last day, we are going to have a long session in the morning, and that leaves us now one complete chapter, the last chapter, to get through in that one long session. That should be quite a grand finale to the retreat as a whole.

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DAY TEN

"Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi ... in Anathapindika's Park.

Now on that occasion the Exalted One was teaching, establishing, rousing and making the monks happy with a discourse according to dhamma that was centred on nibbana. And those monks, earnestly paying attention, mentally taking it all in, were listening to dhamma with ready ears.

Then the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'Monks, there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air: wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither-consciousness-nor-unconsciousness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon-and-sun. Thence, monks, I declare is no coming to birth; thither is no going (from life); herein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no arising. It is not something fixed, it moves not on, it is not based on anything. That indeed is the end of Ill.'

S: This is a quite important episode. This udana is often quoted, because it makes it clear that Nirvana for the Buddha was not merely a state of cessation of ignorance and craving. It did have what, for want of a better term, we can call a positive content. We don't often find the Buddha speaking about Nirvana, but here he does speak about it and makes it quite clear, as far as it can be made clear through the medium of words, what Nirvana actually is. So, even though in this passage there are quite a number of negations and negative statements, the general impression that one gets is that Nirvana isn't simply a state of cessation of the mundane. It does as it were exist in its own right. Also, it is quite noticeable that the Buddha speaks about Nirvana in this way only when he finds that the monks are 'earnestly paying attention, mentally taking it all in, ...listening to dhamma with ready ears.' In other words, the monks have to be receptive first before the Buddha can speak in this way about these things. Normally, the Buddha doesn't say very much about Nirvana. He simply mentions it, and spends most of his time speaking about what has to be done to get to Nirvana. But here he does actually speak about Nirvana itself, and makes it as clear as he can what Nirvana is. Any query on that? (Long pause.) All right, then on to the next one.

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"(This sutta repeats the previous one and adds): Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift: Hard is the infinite to see; truth is no easy thing to see; Craving is pierced by him who knows; for him who seeth naught remains."

S: 'For him who seeth naught remains.' In other words, for one who truly sees, one who has developed Insight or Wisdom, nothing of a conditioned nature remains. He is no longer bound to conditioned existence; so far as conditioned existence is concerned, he has become a man of naught. He has only Nirvana. 'Hard is the infinite to see; truth is no easy thing to see.' According to the footnote, the original is anattam, the self-less, but the translator has rendered it as 'the infinite'. But it suggests Ultimate Reality, and the next part of the line says

'truth is no easy thing to see'. So it isn't easy to see the Real, it isn't easy to see the Truth, it isn't easy to see the infinite, it isn't easy to see the self-less nature of things. But if one does see, if one can see, then one pierces through all craving, all conditionality, and no craving, no conditionality, is left. So this udana seems in a way complementary to the first one. In the first one, the Buddha has done his utmost to give the monks some idea of what Nirvana is actually like, but in the next udana he reminds them that Nirvana is very hard indeed to see. The truth of things is very hard indeed to see; but if one does see it, if one can see it, then one pierces through the whole of the conditioned, so that nothing conditioned is left so far as oneself is concerned. The conditioned is as it were swallowed up in the Unconditioned.

Any query on this? (Silence.) All right, on to the third one, which is connected with the previous two.

"(This sutta repeats the previous two and adds): Thereupon the Exalted ... One gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'Monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. Monks, if that unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded were not, there would be apparent no escape from this here that is born, become, made, compounded. But since, monks, there is an unborn ... therefore the escape from this here born, become ... is apparent.'

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S: There seems to be a word missing from the text here. 'From this here that is born', etc.

Here the Buddha goes, as it were, a step further. In the first of the three udanas he makes it clear that Nirvana is as it were positive, that it doesn't consist merely in the cessation of craving, aversion and delusion. It has as it were a positive nature of its own. It is not a mere absence or negation of the conditioned. Then in the second udana he goes on to make it clear that Nirvana is not easy to see, is not easy to know. And then in the third udana he draws a sort of conclusion that, if there was no such thing as Nirvana as a positive entity, as it were, there would not be any escape from the samsara. If the Unconditioned did not actually exist, there would be no escape from the conditioned; which suggests that the Unconditioned is not a mere absence or cessation of the conditioned but has again as it were a positive nature of its own, and that it is only by as it were grasping hold of this Unconditioned that one can escape from the conditioned. You can't as it were, standing on the conditioned, simply negate the conditioned. You have as it were to take hold of the Unconditioned in order to be able to rise above the conditioned. This is a quite important point. It is a bit like what I sometimes say about it not being positive to solve problems on their own level. You have to rise to a higher level where they can be resolved. So that if there were in fact no higher level, no resolution of problems on the lower level would be possible. In view of what the Buddha says here, it is rather unfortunate that, in later formulations of the Teaching, so much is made of the purely negative side. No doubt one shouldn't think of Nirvana as existent in too literal terms, but probably, from the purely practical point of view, it is better to think of it in crudely positive terms than in purely negative terms. Because, if you think of it in crudely positive terms, at least you've got something to which you can go forward, and you can refine your conception of it as you go forward, in the light of your own experience and your own further and deeper understanding. But if you have a purely negative conception of Nirvana, if you think of it merely as the cessation of the mundane, of the conditioned, then there is nothing of a positive nature to attract you, nothing to pull you forward. All you can do is to chip away at the

conditioned until there is nothing of it left, and then there is nothing at all left. You just as it were fall through the void - the void in the sense of vacancy - except, of course, there isn't any 'you' left any more even to fall through. There is just total vacancy. But that isn't the Buddhist conception, certainly not the Buddha's conception. Probably it is best to think and speak in terms of growing into Nirvana, which is as it were something positive. So the Buddha makes it clear that it is only because there is an actually existent higher spiritual state, even transcendental state, as it were waiting to be reached, waiting to be realized, that such a thing as the spiritual life, such a thing as the whole process of the Higher Evolution, is possible. The spiritual life consists in the knowing, in the realization, of this higher, transcendental principle; not merely in the annihilation of the conditioned. So there is quite a difference between getting rid of the conditioned in order to reach the Unconditioned, and just getting rid of the conditioned and (finding) that the state of having merely got rid of the conditioned is the Unconditioned. In other words, the practical conclusion is that there cannot be a purely negative conception of the spiritual life; the spiritual life itself can't be [471] a purely negative process. It is the progressive recognition, or achievement, of something positive - positive in the highest sense.

: I find this rather difficult. Going back to the first verse, it does seem to me to be mainly - almost entirely - couched in negative terms. I don't get that feeling that you speak of, that it's positive.

S: You don't, hm. Well, put it this way. You couldn't say so much about something which was merely the absence of something else. Also, in the original Pali, the construction is a bit different. For instance, in the English it says: 'Monks, there exists that condition'. The Pali starts off: Atthi, bhikkhave - atthi meaning 'There is', just like that - 'There is, O monks', which conveys a quite different impression. 'There is, O monks, that condition', dhatu - it is translated as 'condition', but one could even say 'entity', 'principle'. So the Buddha makes it clear that there is something; there is an as it were objectively existent principle. To characterize that is difficult, but he seems to leave no doubt that it does actually exist, that it is not merely a cessation or absence of something conditioned. But Indian language, unfortunately, even when the meaning is positive, is often if form, grammatically at least, quite negative. For instance, there is the word amata, which means the immortal, the deathless; that is a good example, because in English also we have got 'immortality', but that is a negative term, grammatically - 'not mortal'. But to us it conveys a positive impression, doesn't it, a positive suggestion? If you speak in terms of 'immortality' you don't mean mere absence of death; you mean actual life, endless life. So much of Indian language and terminology is of this nature. It is formally or grammatically negative, but conveys a positive impression, certainly to the Indian ear but not so much to our ear, unfortunately.

Subhuti: Just looking through it now, the words that stand out are the ones like 'there exists', 'there is', 'thence', 'thither', 'therein'.

Devaraja: The impression I got was a kind of opening out, a sort of removing of the usual limitations that exist. And I wonder to what extent this is due to the fact that I have a sympathy and feeling for, and a belief in, the whole idea of reincarnation and the limitations suggested by that. I wonder to what extent the fact that you don't find it so broadening is because maybe you hadn't entirely related to that or hadn't got some feel for that. : No, I don't really have a feeling for that at all. It's never resonated with me ...

S: The two ideas aren't connected; certainly they're not connected here.

Devaraja: No, but if there is 'no coming to birth' ...

S: Ah, in that sense.

Devaraja: - and so on, that implies sort of limitations implied by reincarnation and birth in the conditioned, and a whole cycle of constantly happening things, chained to that. Then the way the Buddha puts it here suggests a breaking through that.

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S: No, but there again, if the Unconditioned has a nature of its own, it does not have to be expressed in terms of the conditioned.

Devaraja: No, but when he talks about that there is no birth or that there's infinite space, there's no limitation, 'neither earth nor water nor fire nor air', even; these are all the sort of things that I associate with the conditioned, existing within the conditioned, that are dependent ...

S: Yes, but supposing for instance your sense experience was limited. Suppose you didn't know what fire was. It wouldn't convey any meaning to say that in the Unconditioned there was no such thing as fire, would it? But it wouldn't prevent you from believing in the existence of an Unconditioned. So, in the same way, you can say that the Unconditioned has its own nature, quite apart from the fact that it also is as it were the cessation of birth and rebirth. So that the fact that, in the Unconditioned, there is no birth and rebirth tells you something about it from the point of view of the conditioned but not from the point of view of the Unconditioned. So therefore, the fact that in the Unconditioned there is no rebirth has nothing to do with the nature of the Unconditioned itself.

Devaraja: No, but ...

S: So, therefore, if you don't believe in rebirth, provided you've got other avenues of approach, that does not prevent you from accepting the Unconditioned.

Devaraja: Yes. I was only really talking about my own - why I was able to respond to it, and that it ...

S: Well, that is an avenue of approach. But one could say that, even by thinking of the Unconditioned as the cessation of birth and death, and so on, you haven't got any nearer to the Unconditioned. Because that doesn't tell you what it is like in itself, but only what it is like, or rather not like, in terms of something else. So the Buddha is as it were telling you what it is not like just so that you don't look in the wrong direction; but that does not actually reveal what the Unconditioned is like.

Devaraja: No, but I felt that ...

S: So the approach is not an approach to the Unconditioned. It only helps you to avoid mistaking the conditioned for the Unconditioned. It doesn't tell you what the Unconditioned itself is like.

Devaraja: Yes, but I have to get some sort of feel for something, another possibility.

S: That's true, yes.

Devaraja: Well, the way that comes for me is because it opens out, it's ...

S: No, the fact that you happen to believe, say, in karma and rebirth and so on doesn't get you any nearer the Unconditioned, simply because in the Unconditioned there is no further rebirth. Because it only shows [473] you what the Unconditioned is not, and it indicates where you are not to look for the Unconditioned. But it doesn't get you any further in the direction of understanding what the Unconditioned itself actually is. Hm?

Devaraja: Yes, I agree with you!

S: So whether you believe in rebirth or not - I mean, if you believe in it, then when the Buddha says that in the Unconditioned there is no rebirth it means that you don't mistake the samsaric process for the Unconditioned. But if you don't happen to believe in karma and rebirth, you don't need that particular negation; you don't need to be told that the Unconditioned is not to be found in the process of birth and rebirth and so on. So you are not prevented from having access to the Unconditioned because you don't happen to believe in karma and rebirth.

Devaraja: I wasn't suggesting that.

S: And if you do, it doesn't provide you with a means of approach to it, necessarily. It merely means you have to be reminded not to look for the Unconditioned there, in that particular aspect of the conditioned.

Devaraja: I wasn't suggesting that, Bhante. I was just saying that I found it helped me.

S: Ah, but it doesn't help one get any closer to the Unconditioned.

Devaraja: Maybe not, but at least it helps me to see that the conditioned is a limited process and that the Unconditioned is an unlimited process, something unlimited. Because he uses words like 'not-compounded, not-made, not-become, unborn'.

S: Yes, but you did also suggest that if one didn't believe in rebirth one was therefore hindered, as it were, in one's approach to the Unconditioned. But that in fact is not so.

Devaraja: I agree. But I was just saying that it helped me - by having a feeling for that kind of process of rebirth, I found it enabled me to feel, to get something very positive, from that. Which is the point I made.

S (chuckling): No, I don't think that was the point I was making. Subhuti: I think if you read a passage like this straight through without thinking too much about it, without picking out particular things, you do get a feeling of at least something different to the conditioned. Not ...

S: You get the impression that the Buddha is speaking about something. This is really what you get. That the Buddha is speaking about something, which is not anything conditioned; he

is speaking about the Unconditioned. But that he is unable, as it were, to say what the Unconditioned is, very concretely. He can do very little more than say that it is not, and that it is not to be identified with, or mistaken for, any aspect of the conditioned. But he is able really to do no more than just point in the direction of the Unconditioned. But the passage as a whole, it seems, doesn't [474] leave you in any doubt that there is an Unconditioned, quite separate, as it were, from the conditioned and with, as it were again, a nature, a positive nature, of its own. And the Buddha points to that as the end of suffering. That the end of suffering is not the end of suffering: the Unconditioned is the end of suffering. In fact, there cannot be an end of suffering just as an end of suffering. There can only be a realization of the Unconditioned, after which or upon which there is an end of suffering. Is that quite clear? It is really, isn't it? But this is not what is usually said, or not how the Buddha's teaching is usually explained. But this particular passage really makes it quite clear. And, as I mentioned earlier, it is very often quoted in books about Buddhism, it is a very important, in fact quite crucial passage. But the full import of it doesn't always seem to be brought out. First of all, you could even go through that first passage, and go into it a little more in detail; and say, first of all, 'there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air.' It is not a cosmic principle, like the cosmic principles of some of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. It is also not even a sort of psychological or mental principle. It is not the sphere of infinite consciousness or no-thing-ness, or neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. In fact, it is beyond this world altogether; there is no world, no sun, no moon. Also it is a state outside time; there is no coming to be, there is no going - 'from life' is a commentarial addition. There is no duration. It is not a process, as it were. So inasmuch as it isn't something that goes on as a process within time, there can't be any falling away from it, nor any arising. At the same time, it isn't something fixed - yet it doesn't move on. It isn't based on anything else. It is completely autonomous and sovereign, as it were, ultimate. So you see the Buddha trying to give you some idea about it, but you do get the impression that there is an 'it' about which he is trying to give you some impression, some idea. 'And that indeed is the end of Ill.' The end of Ill by itself, the end of dukkha by itself, is not the end of dukkha; it is only this particular principle, this Unconditioned, and the realization of this Unconditioned, which constitutes the end of dukkha. So that when dukkha ends it is not like a process which is going on and on like that, and then the process comes to an end and after that, nothing; though this is sometimes how Buddhism is interpreted, and Nirvana is interpreted as it were as that nothing. But when the conditioned ceases, you come in contact with the Unconditioned. This is what the Buddha is saying here. And also, even more clearly, in this third udana. 'But since, monks, there is an unborn ... therefore the escape from this here that is born, become (etc.) is apparent.'

Which is as if to say you can't just lift yourself up by your bootlaces. You have to take hold of a branch, as it were, which is above you and pull yourself up by that. If that branch was not there you could not lift yourself from the ground. Also, it seems to suggest that in order for it to be possible for you to develop or you to grow or you to evolve, you need an ideal which is as it were outside of you, ahead. It is not enough to think in terms of 'I must get rid of this and get rid of that. I must overcome my anger or eliminate my craving.' You need a positive goal, as it were, in front of you, a positive ideal, the attractive part of which you can actually feel, or towards which you can feel yourself moving.

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Probably this is the most quoted passage in the whole of the udana.

Devaraja: What, iii or i?

S: The first one, especially. You do get the same teaching as you get in No. iii in one of the suttas in the Majjhima Nikaya - that is to say the Ariyapariyesana wherein the Buddha speaks about his own early reflections; where he reflects that, at present, he himself is conditioned and he is going in search of the conditioned, of things that are conditioned. And then he says to himself, 'Suppose now I were to change that. Supposing, myself being conditioned, I were to go in quest of the Unconditioned.' And this is the ariyapariyesana. Ariyapariyesana means the noble quest or the noble search. And the other, a conditioned being going in quest of the conditioned, is the anariyapariyesana, the ignoble quest. Eana, by the way, is an Upanishadic word which means seeking in a very strong sense; questing is not nearly strong enough. It means going ardently in pursuit of: esana. So the ariya pariyesana is the going ardently in search of, or in quest of, the Unconditioned or the Absolute, on the part of a conditioned being. But for a conditioned being to go ardently in pursuit of things which also are conditioned like himself, this is the ignoble quest or the ignoble seeking. So the Buddha describes how, from the ignoble quest, he as it were transferred to the noble quest, and that is when he Went Forth, became a Wanderer. So this also suggests the existence of the Unconditioned as an as it were independent principle, not as merely the cessation of the conditioned.

All right, on to iv. (This sutta repeats the previous three and adds): Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

'For him who clings there is wavering; for him who clings not there is no wavering. Wavering not being, there is calm; calm being, there is no bending. Bending not being, there is no coming-and-going (to birth); coming-and-going not being, there is no decease-and-rebirth. Decease-and-rebirth not being, there is no "here" or "yonder" nor anything between the two. This indeed is the end of Ill.

S: 'For him who clings there is wavering'. What do you think this means? Can you give an example of that? What is wavering?

: Doubt.

S: Doubt; indecision. So how is that? How is wavering, or doubt and indecision connected with clinging?

: Is that clinging to the conditioned, presumably, clinging to conditioned things?

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S: Presumably, yes.

: Refusing to move on.

S: Refusing to move on, yes. But give a simple example.

ABC: If you're worried that you've left the kettle on when you're trying to meditate.

S: Yes, but where does the clinging come in?

ABC: The mind is clinging to it all the time.

S: That wasn't quite what I had in mind. That is more like an example of unmindfulness.

Devaraja: Maybe still seeking happiness in samsara, in the conditioned; one's mind not completely bent on - not fully realizing that happiness is only to be found in the Unconditioned.

S: Give an example of clinging, and then show how it results in wavering.

: Er ...

S: That is an excellent one! It is quite clear, isn't it? Supposing you might have left somebody up in London, safely parked away in a little flat, but you think, 'What's she doing now?' etc. etc. So because of the clinging, there is wavering. 'Should I give a telephone call, just to find out, or should I not? Or should I write, or should I not? Or should I ask someone to go and check up on what she's doing, or not?' and in this way wavering arises, on account of the clinging. This is a sort of common example, but one could give dozens and even hundreds of others. For instance, you might have a strong clinging to sweets and cigarettes and so on, and you might be thinking: 'Should I go into the village and get some or not? Well, if I do, that won't be very good. What will other people think? At the same time, I'd rather like to have those things.' So in this way wavering arises out of the clinging. So 'for him who clings not there is no wavering.' Well, that's pretty obvious. 'Wavering not being, there is calm.' You have perfect peace of mind. So a lot of your non-peace of mind, a lot of your disturbance of mind, is just caused by wavering due to clinging. And much of the time, we are in this state of wavering, of doubt and indecision, not being sure what to do or not do. And it isn't because of any actual objective situation to be thought about, or a decision taken about it, but just to our clinging. That if, for instance, I do this, I shall lose that; if I get involved in such-and-such, I can't get involved in something else. And so on. If I win on the swings I shall lose on the roundabouts; I don't want to do either. So, where there is no clinging, there is no wavering. And 'Wavering not being, there is calm.' And 'calm being, there is no bending.' So what is bending? This is rather obscure. It seems to mean bending towards the conditioned; because 'bending not being, there is no coming-and-going (to birth)'. So bending seems to be a sort of habitual stance of clinging, which results not simply in wavering but this constant [477] pendulum-like swinging between pairs of opposites, and especially between birth and rebirth or life and death. So this is the way in which the reactive mind functions. It just wavers. It bends and unbends and swings to and fro, goes from one extreme to the other, and all on account of clinging. So when there is no clinging, there is no wavering, no doubt, no indecision, no bending, no unbending, no swinging this way and that, and no turning round and round on the Wheel of Life. So 'Decease-and-rebirth not being,' - that is to say, if the Wheel of Life completely stops, if one is no longer revolving between pairs of opposites - 'there is no "here" or "yonder" nor anything between the two. This indeed is the end of Ill.'

This ties up with something I said in one of the first lectures I gave under the auspices of the Friends. Do you remember that? It was the lecture on the Tibetan Book of the Dead in 'Aspects of Buddhist Psychology', and I spoke about the antarabhava - do you remember that? (Murmurs.) The intermediate state; the six intermediate states. And then I spoke about the general principle of the intermediate state. It was the point at which, as it were, between two opposites, or two extremes, the point at which there was rest, where the action of one extreme

had come to an end and the other not begun. It is a bit like that here. There is an intermediate point where the pendulum, just for an infinitesimal instant, stops. And this, you could say, is 'the end of Ill'; except that you've got to keep it up indefinitely, and remain all the time, as it were, in that middle point between the two extremes. If one can do that, there is no wavering; there is complete calm, therefore there is stability. And therefore there is an 'end of Ill'.

Devaraja: Maybe I haven't fully understood - it says 'Nor anything between the two'.

S: Ah! One can look at that in several ways. There is a commentarial note, *ubhayam antare*, which means 'in between the two extremes'. One can look at it here as the *antarabhava*, the intermediate state between death and rebirth in the quite literal sense. If there is no death and no rebirth, then also there is no in-between state. One can look at it in this way, too. (Devaraja: Ah!) So 'Decease-and-rebirth not being, there is no "here" or "yonder"' - 'here' meaning this life, especially the end of this life, and 'yonder' meaning the next life, especially the beginning of the next life; 'nor anything between the two' - i.e. no intermediate state. The Theravadins, incidentally, don't believe in an intermediate state, but it is interesting that in the Pali Canon there is a reference to it here. The Sarvastivadins did believe in the intermediate state, and it is from them that the Tibetans took it up.

So it is quite important to see the sort of general significance of this particular *udana*, lifting it out, as it were, of its immediate doctrinal context. It really says three things. First of all, there is a state of wavering, which is due to clinging, a state of oscillating between extremes. The important thing to do is to come to rest at a central point; not to waver. And if you can come to rest at that central point, you will make contact, as it were, with something outside the sphere of the opposites, something beyond the conditioned; you will make contact with the Unconditioned. In fact, one can say that when one reaches this state of calm, even in a quite ordinary sense, you [478] feel as it were centred.

So in a way it is a quite important sequence.

'For him who clings not there is no wavering. Wavering not being, there is calm; calm being, there is no bending. Bending not being, there is no coming-and-going; coming-and-going not being, there is no decease-and rebirth. Decease-and-rebirth not being, there is no "here" or "yonder" nor anything between the two. This indeed is the end of Ill.'

One can take it even within the limits as it were of the present lifetime, with reference to this oscillatory movement between contradictory emotions, contradictory feelings, all based upon clinging. Once the clinging goes, the wavering goes; when the wavering goes, you are calm, you are at rest or you are centred. And from that experience of centrality within yourself, you can begin to contact the Unconditioned.

: Could you explain a bit more what 'bending' means?

S: 'Bending' seems to mean here bending towards the conditioned. It is as though you are permanently bent in that direction. This is what it suggests: that, if you constantly cling, you become as it were frozen in a posture of clinging, and that is what is meant by bending. You are permanently oriented in the direction of the conditioned, in the direction of the cyclic process. You become sort of 'bent' in the quite ordinary colloquial sense of the term.

Devaraja: It takes a considerable degree of effort to start bending the other way!

S: Or you could say 'calm being, there is no bending' in the sense of no instability. If you are completely calm you have no inclination to move in this direction or that, to this extreme or that. If you are completely balanced, there is no reason why you should move in one direction more than in any other, so far as your own subjective feelings are concerned. This is how you feel, very often, when you are meditating; you feel completely balanced, you feel completely poised, completely calm, ready to roll in any direction as it were but not under any internal necessity to do so.

In section v, we come very near to the end of the Buddha's life, and it is a fairly lengthy little section, almost like a short sutta. It seems to be something of the nature of a compilation, as a number of suttas are, and there are also a few minor inconsistencies, due no doubt to the putting together of material from different sources, different traditions. But we won't bother too much about all that. We'll just read straight through it first, and then discuss whatever needs to be discussed.

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Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was going his rounds among the Mallas together with a great company of monks, and came to Pava. And it happened that the Exalted One was staying in the mango-grove of Cunda the smith at Pava. Now Cunda the smith heard it said: 'They say the Exalted One, while going his rounds among the Mallas together with a great company of monks, has reached Pava': 'and I hear,' said he, 'that he is staying in my mango-grove.' Accordingly Cunda the smith went to visit the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. As he thus sat the Exalted One taught, established, roused and made happy Cunda the smith with a discourse according to dhamma.

Then Cunda the smith, being thus taught, established, roused and made happy, said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, may the Exalted One accept this day's meal of me together with the order of monks.' And the Exalted One consented by his silence. Thereupon Cunda the smith, seeing the Exalted One's consent, rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side and went away. Then Cunda the smith, when that night had passed, got ready in his own house choice food, both hard and soft, together with a generous dish of truffles, and announced the time for the meal, saying to the Exalted One, 'It is time, sir. The meal is ready.'

Then the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, set out together with the order of monks for the house of Cunda the smith, and on coming there sat down on a seat made ready. On sitting down the Exalted One said this to Cunda the smith: 'Cunda, as to the dish of truffles you have prepared, serve me with that. As to the other food, both hard and soft, which you have prepared, serve the order of monks with that.' 'Very well, sir,' replied Cunda the smith to the Exalted One, and did as he was told.

Afterwards the Exalted One said to Cunda the smith, 'Cunda, as to the remains of the dish of truffles, bury them in a hole. For I see not any one, Cunda, in the world with its devas, its Maras, its Brahmas, with its host of recluses and brahmins, with its devas and mankind, I see not any one by whom that food when eaten could be digested, save only by the Wayfarer.' 'Very well, sir,' replied Cunda the smith, lending ear to the Exalted One; and having buried in a hole the remains of the dish of truffles he came to the Exalted One, and saluting him sat

down at one side. As he thus sat, the Exalted One, having taught, established, roused and made happy Cunda the smith with a discourse according to dhamma, rose up from his seat and went away.

Now after the Exalted One had eaten of the meal given by Cunda the smith, there arose in him a severe sickness, and grievous pains accompanied by a bloody [480] flux and like to end in death. Those pains indeed the Exalted One, mindful and composed, endured without being distressed thereby.

Then the Exalted One called to the venerable Ananda, 'Ananda, let us go! We will go to Kusinara.'

'Very well, sir,' replied the venerable Ananda to the Exalted One.

(When he had eaten Cunda's food, - thus have I heard, - Th' Inspired One felt a sickness dire, to end in death. So, having eaten, from those truffles sickness dire Rose in the Teacher. When the flux had ended, said Th' Exalted One, 'I go to Kusinara town.')

Then the Exalted One, stepping off the path, went towards the root of a certain tree, and on reaching it called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Come, Ananda, make ready my robe folded in four. I am weary. I will sit down.' 'Yes, sir,' said the venerable Ananda, and in obedience to the Exalted One made ready the robe folded in four. And the Exalted One sat down on the seat made ready. After sitting down he called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Come, Ananda, fetch me water! I am thirsty, Ananda. I would drink.'

At these words the venerable Ananda said this to the Exalted One:

'Just now, sir, as many as five hundred carts have crossed over. That water, stirred by the wheels, being shallow flows foul and muddied. But not far off sir, is this river Kukultha, with water sparkling and pleasant, cool and clear, easy of access, delightful. Here the Exalted One can drink and cool his limbs.' Then a second time the Exalted One made the same request, and received the same reply. And yet a third time he made the same request. Thereupon the venerable Ananda saying, 'Very well, sir,' in obedience to the Exalted One, took the bowl and went towards that rivulet. Now that rivulet, stirred by the wheels and being shallow, was flowing foul and muddied. But, as soon as the venerable Ananda approached, it flowed bright and pure, fresh and unmuddied.

Then the venerable Ananda thought: A wonder indeed! A miracle indeed wrought by the mighty power and majesty of the Wayfarer! Why, this rivulet which, stirred by the cart-wheels, being shallow, was flowing foul and muddied, on my approach flowed bright and pure, fresh and unmuddied! So taking water in the bowl he went to the Exalted One, and on coming to him said this: 'Sir, it is a wonder! It is a miracle wrought by the mighty power and majesty of the Wayfarer! ... this rivulet now flows fresh and unmuddied. Let the [481] Exalted One drink the water. Let the Wellfarer drink the water.' And the Exalted One drank that water.

Then the Exalted One, with a great company of monks, came to the river Kukultha, and on reaching it plunged into the river, and having bathed and drunk and come up again he went to the mango-grove and called to the venerable Cundaka, 'Come, Cundaka! Make ready my robe

folded in four. I am weary. I will sit down.'

'Very well, sir,' replied the venerable Cundaka, and in obedience to the Exalted One made ready the robe folded in four. Thereupon the Exalted One lay down on his right side in the lion posture, resting one foot on the other, mindful and composed, and turned his thoughts to rising up again. But the venerable Cundaka there and then sat down in front of the Exalted One.

(Th' Awakened One went to Kukuttha's stream Bright-flowing, fresh, unmuddied, and therein The Teacher plunged, full wearied was he. In this world matchless, he the Wayfare, Bathing and drinking, came forth, he the Teacher Escorted midmost of a troop of monks. - Teacher, Exalted One, World-teacher he - The mighty sage drew near the mango-grove.

He called a monk, one Cundaka by name, Saying, 'Spread me a robe fourfold as couch.' He, bidden by the one-with-self-made-firm, Spread him a robe fourfold as couch straightway. Then down the Teacher lay full wearied, And Cunda sat him down, in front of him.)

Then the Exalted One called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'It may be, Ananda, that someone will arouse remorse in Cunda the smith by saying: "It is a loss for you, worthy Cunda. It is a thing ill-gotten for you, worthy Cunda, in that the Wayfarer passed finally away after eating his last meal at your hands."

Such remorse in Cunda the smith should be checked, Ananda (by saying): "It is a gain to you, worthy Cunda. It was well-gotten by you that the Wayfarer passed finally away after eating his last meal at your hands. Face to face with him, worthy Cunda, I have heard it, face to face with him I got this saying: 'These two gifts of food are of exactly equal merit, of equal result, are far more fruitful and profitable than any other gifts of food. What two? That gift of food after eating which a Wayfarer is awakened with supreme wisdom and that gift of food after eating which a Wayfarer passes finally away by the element of nibbana which leaves no remainder. These two gifts of food are of exactly equal merit, of equal result, are far more fruitful and profitable than any other gifts of food.' By the worthy Cunda the smith karma has been set going which conduces to length of days, which conduces to beauty, to happiness, to the heaven world, and to fame; karma has been set going which conduces to [482] supremacy." That, Ananda, is how the remorse of Cunda the smith should be checked.'

Thereupon the Exalted One ... gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

For him that giveth merit is increased. In those restrained anger is not heaped up. The righteous doth abandon evil things. By ending of lust, hatred and delusion, Released is such an one, cooled utterly.'

S: There has been quite a discussion about this last meal and what it actually consisted of, whether it was mushrooms, truffles, boar's flesh or what not. There has also been quite a bit of discussion as to why the Buddha said it could not be digested by anybody except a Buddha. And all sorts of meanings have been read into the episode and that statement by the commentators. But it seems to me quite simple. It seems to me that Cunda, in his enthusiasm and out of his devotion, prepared a dish of truffles, or whatever it was, for the Buddha, and served, no doubt, the Buddha first. It was so rich and heavy and indigestible that the Buddha, after eating it himself - out of politeness as it were - just asked Cunda to bury the rest. He said

nobody else would be able to digest it. And perhaps, knowing his well-known irony, we can even say the Buddha said: 'Cunda, only a Buddha could digest this meal!' It seems to me something like that is much more likely than these rather far-fetched magical explanations that some of the commentaries give, to the effect that, for instance, all the devas in the universe had infused tremendous fiery energy into that food, so that only a Buddha was able to digest it, and so on. It seems to me there is a much more ordinary, naturalistic, explanation. It is just another example of the Buddha's thoughtfulness; that, as he didn't want Cunda to feel remorse, thinking that 'After eating food offered by me, the Buddha died - that I have as it were been responsible for the death of the Buddha', in the same way as the Buddha wanted to make quite sure that Cunda didn't feel any such remorse, he also wanted to make quite sure that none of his monks were given this over-rich, indigestible food to eat, so he asked Cunda to go and bury it somewhere in a hole. On the other hand, there may be some symbolical meaning also, but that isn't very clear to us.

Devaraja: So you don't feel there is necessarily a direct link between truffles being bad, or something like that, and the Buddha's illness?

S: Well, the text, or at least the commentarial verse, states that: 'So, having eaten, from those truffles sickness dire / Rose in the Teacher.' The immediate occasion of the Buddha's death seems to have been this heavy and indigestible meal, whatever it was. And the Buddha didn't want Cunda to feel regret and remorse thinking that his meal had been responsible for killing the Buddha. No doubt it wasn't the cause so much as the occasion, because certainly the Buddha did die after eating it; it was his last meal. He died within 24 hours, apparently. But we are not given the whole story here in this section of the Udana.

: I was always under the impression that Devadatta had a hand in it. I rather see it as the Buddha was purposely poisoned.

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S: No. There are accounts of Devadatta's trying to assassinate the Buddha in various ways, but the Buddha's actual death had nothing to do with that. Devadatta died some time before the Buddha - it seems some years before the Buddha, in fact. Because Sariputta and Moggallana were still alive, it seems, when he died, and they predeceased the Buddha by several years.

You will notice that the section concludes with that udana, and we don't in this particular work, that is to say, the Udana, hear anything more about the last days, or rather, now, the last hours, of the Buddha. Why that is so, we shall be seeing a little later on, but there does seem to be a definite reason for that. It is as it were an artistic reason. But you can see that we have now practically traversed the Buddha's entire life; that, even though the Udana isn't a biography, or even mainly biographical, and though it doesn't keep to strict chronological sequence, it moves backwards and forwards in time; but on the whole there is a progressive movement from the time of the Buddha's Enlightenment or just after, right up to a few hours before his death. And we get a very definite feeling of the gradual growth and development of the Teaching and the whole movement, the Sangha and so on. We even get an impression to some extent of the growing complexity. So, on the whole, as I said earlier on, the Udana is a very good, complete little work, practically like a gospel, as it were. Though it is only a very small part of the total Pali Canon, it does give us a small-scale picture of the whole thing, which is more or less complete in all its parts. We certainly don't get all the teachings, we

don't get all the episodes, but what we do get is very representative and gives a very good total impression, a very true, very faithful total impression. Also, the material seems comparatively unworked up, as it were, unelaborated, compared with some of the later elaborations, that is. So we are pretty close to the original sources of the whole movement, pretty close to what the Buddha actually did and said and thought, and the way in which he lived, the experiences he had, the people he met, the sort of milieu in which he lived and worked. So I would say if there is any one work that we wanted to recommend to people from the Pali Canon or the Theravada tradition to give them a rough idea of what it was actually like to be alive in the Buddha's day and actually to encounter him and listen to his message, then one would probably have to recommend the Udana. Even the Udana isn't perfect, but it's the nearest thing we've got of this nature.

Devaraja: It would be really excellent if - because the translation leaves a lot to be desired ...

S: It does.

Devaraja: - if you could retranslate it ...

S: I would really like to. It is not a difficult text. It would not stretch my limited philological attainments. While we are on the topic of translations, yesterday evening I was comparing two translations of Dhyana for Beginners. There are two: one produced by Dwight Goddard and a Chinese bhikshu, included in Buddhist Bible, and the other produced recently by Charles Luk in Secrets of Chinese meditation. We shall be using the one in the Buddhist Bible, but I also thought it wise to consult and go through Charles Luk's translation. [484] What I find is that Charles Luk's translation seems to be much more technical and accurate, and it gives Sanskrit equivalents of Chinese Buddhist terms much more accurately, and in that way is quite helpful; but his whole translation seems completely dry. We know, from other sources - well, we know from his own accounts - that he is a man who has practised much meditation; but nothing of this comes across in the translation at all. It might just as well have been made by someone sitting at some seat of learning in the West who had never practised meditation at all. On the other hand, in the Buddhist Bible translation, there is great feeling. It is a quite astonishing difference. You really feel something from this; as though the people who had produced that translation not only had a definite experience but were able to express it in their translation. It reads almost like a different work, though the two translations are not all that different. You can see that they are quite clearly and definitely translations of the same text. But the whole feeling of it is different, in a quite strange way. I just compared certain sections and certain passages - obviously the opening ones. It is very noticeable. The Charles Luk translation is really dry. And this reminded me a bit of what is sometimes said about Kumarajiva's translations from the Sanskrit into the Chinese, and Hsuan Tsang's. Hsuan Tsang's are considered much more accurate and scholarly and faithful, but everybody reads Kumarajiva's, apparently. Those are the ones which are in popular circulation, like the Authorized Version of the Bible. Kumarajiva's translations are the ones that are really read by everybody; and partly because, it is said, of their attractive literary style and their sort of feeling quality. Hsuan Tsang is very accurate and faithful, but he is a bit dry, like Charles Luk. He was a great Buddhist, a very devout Buddhist, even a very heroic Buddhist. He went to India and back on foot, across the Gobi desert, so there is no doubt about his genuineness, but it just doesn't come across.

Devaraja: Is this just a case of literary ability, or ...

S: I just don't know. I hesitate to think it's just a question of literary skill. It's almost like something lacking in the person himself. It's as though the person himself is a bit dry. I just get that feeling about Charles Luk from all his writings - that he's a dry old stick, as it were. A good man, he's done a lot of meditation, but there's something missing. It's the whole positive side, as it were. The positive nidanas are all missing, this is what one feels. But one feels the presence of those positive nidanas in the Buddhist Bible translation. Perhaps it is a bit like that with Kumarajiva's and Hsuan Tsang's translations. But this is quite noticeable.

Devaraja: The thing I've noticed in other stuff I've read of Charles Luk's is that he seems to be very fascinated and very caught up in reports on people's Enlightenment experiences, but in an almost childish way. It seems to be almost treated like magic, there's something magical to explain, particularly when he is writing about Western Buddhists' experiences.

S: Ah, yes. That's quite interesting, because you could say - though this may not necessarily be a truthful statement about him - that if you don't have much experience of your own you tend to be very interested in experiences; just as, if you don't have much warmth of your own, or [485] you might say much 'femininity' of your own, you are always attracted by the feminine and going after the feminine. So it may well be that he is a bit dry, despite all his meditation. He may be a quite worthy person and even perhaps in a measure Enlightened, but he seems to lack those positive nidanas, and you feel the presence of them quite definitely in Dhyana for Beginners. For instance, there is a simile in the opening sentences of the Dhyana for Beginners which is not found in Charles Luk. I can hardly think that the translators in the Buddhist Bible just added it. Maybe it was a sort of commentarial note which got incorporated in an edition of the text, maybe the one that they used, or maybe Charles Luk just cut out that figure of speech. But it speaks in terms of samatha giving you access to vipassana, Insight, and opening it up 'as though with a golden spade'. But that isn't in Luk. So this is quite interesting.

So it would perhaps be a good idea if someone could produce as it were a more lively translation of this particular work; certainly a less archaic translation, as regards the English language.

(Coffee break)

ABC: ... eaten boar's flesh in those circumstances. I gather he would have eaten meat if it was put in his begging bowl.

S: Mm. But I think it is unlikely that people would have as it were deliberately given the Buddha meat; though we must recognize that inasmuch as the Buddha went for alms, and inasmuch as not everybody was a vegetarian in those days, he might sometimes have got meat in his bowl and eaten it. But that was because the going for alms was considered an ascetic practice in its own right, as it were. But as far as I know in the whole Pali Canon, there is no other reference to anyone ever giving the Buddha meat. So I think it is more likely to be truffles or mushrooms. I do remember many years ago I was in that Kusinara area and I did notice that in the mornings there were many small mushrooms there which had sprung up during the night, and some of the monks used to gather them. So if it was mushrooms it is quite feasible that there were some poisonous ones mixed in with the edible ones by mistake. Or it may simply have been that the Buddha at that time, being quite old and not particularly strong, perhaps, just was not able to digest any particularly rich or heavy meal. And we know

that the laypeople, when they entertain the monks, especially when they haven't seen them for a long time, tend to provide very lavish hospitality and practically to force them to eat more than they really want to eat. I have experienced this myself many a time. It is one of the occupational risks of monastic life in Buddhist countries, when the laypeople often force you to eat more than you want out of excess of devotion and zeal and hospitality; and you can hardly refuse. Some of the Ceylon monks used to complain even quite bitterly that the laypeople either left them alone for weeks on end, during which time they didn't have enough to eat, or else invited them to their homes and overfed them, and that there was no Middle Way!

ABC: Maybe also those mushrooms were something poisonous - they might have been quite trippy.

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S: That's also true. But that presumably wouldn't have affected the Buddha.

ABC: But it might have affected his monks. (Laughter.)

S: Yes, that might possibly explain the reference in the commentary to the ojas(?), the energy with which the devas had infused those particular mushrooms. But we don't really know; we are not sure what happened, what particular substances were involved.

All right, let's go on, then, to section vi, which seems to go back a bit in time, and to strike a rather different note.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was going his rounds among the Magadhese together with a great company of monks and arrived at Pataligama.

And the lay-followers of Pataligama heard the rumour: It is said that the Exalted One, going his rounds among the Magadhese... has arrived at Pataligama. So those lay-followers went to see the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated they said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, let the Exalted One accept lodging at our mote-hall.' And the Exalted One accepted by his silence.

So those lay-followers of Pataligama, seeing the consent of the Exalted One, rose up from their seats, saluted him with their right side and went away to the mote-hall. On reaching it they got it ready in every way, appointed seats, set a waterpot and hung up an oil-lamp. Then they went to the Exalted One ... stood at one side and so standing, said: 'Sir, the mote-hall is ready in every way. Seats are appointed, a waterpot is set, an oil-lamp is hung. Let the Exalted One now do what seems good to him.'

Thereupon the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, went along with a great company of monks to the mote-hall, and on reaching it had his feet washed, entered the mote-hall and sat down against the middle pillar, facing the east. The order of monks also had their feet washed, entered the mote-hall and sat down against the western wall, also facing east, with the Exalted One in front of them. The lay-followers of Pataligama also had their feet washed, entered the mote-hall and sat down against the eastern wall, facing west and having the Exalted one in front of them.

Then the Exalted One addressed the lay-followers of Pataligama, saying, 'Housefathers, there are these five disadvantages for the immoral man, by reason of his falling away from virtue. What are the five?

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(i) Herein, housefathers, the immoral man, by reason of falling from virtue, comes by a great loss of wealth of his neglect. This is the first disadvantage for the immoral man by reason of falling from virtue.

(ii) Then again, housefathers, for the immoral man who has fallen from virtue an ill report arises. This is the second disadvantage...

(iii) Again, housefathers, the immoral man who has fallen from virtue, into whatsoever company he enters, be it of nobles, brahmins, housefathers or recluses, enters timidly and confused. This is the third disadvantage...

(iv) Again, housefathers, the immoral man who has fallen from virtue makes an end of life in bewilderment. This is the fourth disadvantage...

(v) Lastly, the immoral man ... when body breaks up, after death, is reborn in the Waste, the Ill-bourn, the Downfall, in Purgatory. This is the fifth disadvantage... And these are the five disadvantages that befall the immoral man who has fallen from virtue.

These five advantages, housefathers, befall the virtuous man because of his practice of virtue. What are the five?

(i) Herein, housefathers, the virtuous man, possessed of virtue, by reason of his earnestness comes by a great mass of wealth. This is the first advantage that befalls the virtuous man because of his practice of virtue.

(ii) Again, housefathers, about the virtuous man possessed of virtue there arises a fair report. This is the second advantage...

(iii) Again, housefathers, the virtuous man possessed of virtue, into whatever company he enters, be it of nobles ... or recluses, enters confident and unconfused. This is the third advantage...

(iv) Again, housefathers, the virtuous man, possessed of virtue, makes an end of life without bewilderment. This is the fourth advantage...

(v) Lastly, housefathers, the virtuous man possessed of virtue, when body breaks up, after death, is reborn in the Happy Bourn, in the Heavenworld. This is the fifth advantage... And these are the five advantages that befall the virtuous man by reason of his practice of virtue.'

So the Exalted One, after teaching, establishing, rousing and making happy the lay followers of Pataligama with a talk according to dhamma till late at night, dismissed them saying, 'Now, housefathers, the night is far spent. Do whatsoever seems good to you.'

So the lay-followers of Pataligama, delighted with the words of the Exalted One, returned

thanks, rose up from their seats, saluted the Exalted One with the right side and went away.

Now the Exalted One, not long after the departure of the lay-followers of Pataligama, retired to his private [488] room. And on that occasion Sunidha and Vassakara, great officials of Magadha, were building a town on the site of Pataligama, for keeping off the Vajjians. And at that time a great number of devatas, in companies of a thousand, had occupied the sites of the buildings at Pataligama. Now in whatsoever place devatas of great power occupy sites, they bend the thoughts of great rulers and officials to build dwelling-places. In whatsoever places devatas of less power occupy sites, there they bend the thoughts of lesser rulers and officials to build dwelling-places.

Now the Exalted One, with deva-sight purified and more than human, beheld those devatas in companies of a thousand occupying sites at Pataligama. He saw that in whatsoever place devatas occupy sites ... they bend the thoughts of rulers and officials to build dwelling-places... And rising up that night when dawn was breaking, he called to the venerable Ananda, saying, 'Ananda, pray who is building a town at Pataligama?'

'Sir, it is Sunidha and Vassakara, great officials of Magadha, who are building a town at Pataligama for keeping off the Vajjians.'

'It would seem, Ananda, that they are doing so after taking counsel with the devas of the Thirty-three. I have just seen, Ananda, with deva-sight purified and more than human, a great number of devatas in companies of a thousand occupying sites at Pataligama. In whatsoever place the devatas of great power occupy sites, they bend the thoughts of great rulers and officials to build dwelling-places. In whatsoever place devatas of less power occupy sites, they bend the thoughts of lesser rulers and officials to build dwelling-places.'

Ananda, as far as the sphere of Ariyans extends, as far as merchants travel, this shall become the chief of towns, the place where men shall open up their bales of merchandise. But, Ananda, three misfortunes shall befall Pataligama - namely, by fire, by water or by breaking of alliances.'

Now Sunidha and Vassakara, great officials of Magadha, came to visit the Exalted One, and on coming to him greeted him courteously, and after the exchange of greetings and courtesies stood at one side. As they thus stood Sunidha and Vassakara ... said this to the Exalted One:

'Let the worshipful Gotama accept our invitation to this day's meal along with the order of monks.'

And the Exalted One accepted by silence. Thereupon Sunidha and Vassakara ... seeing the consent of the Exalted One, returned to their own house, and on getting there made ready in their own house choice food, both hard and soft, and then announced the time to the Exalted One saying, 'It is time, Master Gotama. The meal is cooked.'

So the Exalted One, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe, started to go to the house of [489] Sunidha and Vassakara ... and on getting there sat down on a seat made ready. Then Sunidha and Vassakara served and satisfied the order of monks, headed by the Buddha, with choice food, both hard and soft. Then Sunidha and Vassakara ... seeing that the Exalted One had eaten his fill and had rinsed hand and bowl, took a low seat and sat down at

one side. As they sat thus the Exalted One returned thanks to them in these verses:

In whatsoever place the prudent man shall make his home, Here let him feed good men controlled who live the Brahma-life. To all the devas dwelling there let him make offerings. Thus honoured, they will honour him : revered, they'll him revere. As a mother doth compassionate the child that she hath borne, He whom devas compassionate doth ever see good luck.

So the Exalted One, after returning thanks with these verses to Sunidha and Vassakara, great officials of Magadha, rose from his seat and went away.

Now at that time Sunidha and Vassakara ... were following behind in the footsteps of the Exalted One with this idea: By whatsoever gate Gotama the recluse shall depart, that gate shall become Gotama Gate. By whatsoever landing-stage he shall cross the river Ganges, that shall become Gotama Landing-stage. Accordingly the gate by which the Exalted One departed was so called.

Then the Exalted One reached the river Ganges. Now at that time the river Ganges was brimful, level with the banks, so that a crow might drink therefrom. And some men were hunting for a boat, others for a raft of logs, while some were binding together a bundle of reeds, desirous of crossing to the further shore. But the Exalted One, just as a strong man might straighten out his bent arm or bend his arm outstretched, - even so did he vanish from the hither shore of the river Ganges and land upon the further shore together with the company of monks.

And the Exalted One saw those men, some hunting for a boat, others for a raft of logs, others binding together a bundle of reeds, desirous of crossing to the further shore. Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

To cross the pool, the flood, to span the swamps they make a bridge. See! folk bind their bundle! Sages have already crossed.

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S: There are quite a few points of interest in this sutta. First of all, the general background. It is a very familiar scene, as it were. The Buddha is on tour; he is going his rounds, and on this occasion he is going his rounds among the Magadhese - that is to say, the people of the whole Magadha area. So, together with a great company of monks, he reaches Pataligama. Gama means village; it is still a very small place. And the lay followers, the upasakas of Pataligama - not just laypeople, not just housefathers but upasakas, heard the rumour that the Buddha was going around in that area. So they went to see him, saluted him, sat down at one side, and invited him to accept lodging at their mote-hall. It seems that in every village, especially where there was a republican form of government in the area, they had a mote-hall; what nowadays is called in India a dharmasala - that is to say, a large hall which was used for all community purposes, a sort of community hall, you could call it. There they held their meetings, there they conducted their judicial business, there they listened to lectures by wanderers on tour, and there also the wanderers were often put up or accommodated. This is very much the situation you get in India even today. In practically every village in India, there are one or two dharmasalas put up by devout and wealthy people. Nowadays, of course, they don't hold courts or any such assemblies in the dharmasalas; they are entirely for religious

purposes. But any wandering monk can be put up there, and very often the local people will arrange for him to give a talk and they will all come in the evening and listen; and this clearly is the sort of thing that used to go on in the Buddha's day.

So the lay followers, the upasakas of Pataligama, when they heard that the Buddha was on tour in their area, went to see him and invited him to come and put up at their community hall. So the Buddha does; he goes there with his disciples and the local people have already made it ready. They have put out seats, they have put a waterpot, they have hung up an oil lamp and it is all ready. So the Buddha enters; and apparently there is a central pillar. It is probably just a large wooden building, probably not much bigger than this room, and there is a central pillar supporting the cross beams. So the Buddha sits with his back to that pillar, facing east, and then the monks all sit behind him, with their backs to the western wall; they are also facing east. And the laypeople come in and sit on either side of the entrance, facing west and facing the Buddha who is in the middle, and also facing the monks who are behind him. This is how they all take their seats.

Then the Buddha gives a little discourse. It would appear from the discourse that they are rather new disciples, not spiritually very advanced. They are mainly occupied with their worldly lives. So he gives them a talk mainly about virtue, mainly about sila. He points out the five disadvantages, so far as they are concerned, of not practising sila. And he starts with very simple, practical, ordinary things which they can understand.

By the way, the translation says 'the immoral man', but in English, of course, 'immoral' has a very definite connotation which asilavan - the man who is not practising sila - simply does not have in the original Pali.

: So what does the Pali mean, asilavan?

S: I am giving that word, but I don't say that is the actual word in the text; but the Buddha is talking about sila, so 'the man who does not [491] observe sila'. It is here translated as 'immoral man', but that is much too strong; the whole connotation is wrong. But 'the man who does not observe sila', the man who is not skilful in his behaviour in the full sense. So what happens to him? 'By reason of falling from virtue,' falling from sila, falling from skilful action, he 'comes by a great loss of wealth of his neglect.' So the Buddha is pointing out to these quite practical people the practical results of unskilful non-ethical behaviour. He is thinking of unskilful behaviour like not attending to your own work, not going to the fields regularly, gambling, squandering your money. So he points out that one of the first consequences of an unethical life is simply loss of wealth. And this is surely an argument which will appeal to those people; they are quite simple, ordinary people. So you notice here the way in which the Buddha takes people step by step. He doesn't even start talking about dana, as he often does. He simply advises them to lead an ethical life, and he is pointing out the disadvantage of not doing that; and he says the first disadvantage is that an immoral life, or an unethical life, an unskilful life, costs money; it wastes money; it wastes wealth. Probably this is an argument which will appeal very much to these thrifty householders of that village. You can just imagine them shaking their heads and saying, 'Oh yes, that's true indeed! Living it up in the big city, it really costs money; leading an immoral life, it just wastes wealth.' That seems to be quite a good argument from their point of view for leading an ethical life - the argument from thrift. It is not a very exalted or noble argument, but at least it gets people started.

'Then again, housefathers, for the immoral man who has fallen from virtue an ill report arises.' You get a bad reputation. People don't think much of you. And obviously, in a small village, to be well thought of by your fellow villagers is quite important. So if you're sober and thrifty and industrious and kind and helpful, you get a good reputation in the community. That is a good thing. I think perhaps people who live in cities or whose ancestors, maybe, have lived in big cities for a long time, can't quite imagine what it's like in a small village and how much importance in primitive communities is attached to a good name and good report in your own community, in your own village. It means a very great deal. And if you offend, if you happen to offend the whole community, very often you have to take definite steps to rectify that. If you've done or said something that has upset everybody, you may have to give a feast for the whole village, just to reconcile them and make things all right. Whereas in the big city you don't have to do those sort of things. If you offend the group of people that you are usually associated with, and if you don't want to do anything about it, you just cut off contact and make new friends, join a new group, a new circle; but in a small village, where everybody is tied there as they were in those days, everybody tied to the soil except the wanderers, you just have to live with those people, you have to live with one another so you can't afford to go against them too much or displease them too much. Not only that, it is very important for you as an individual, or at least as a member of that group, to have a good name within the group. So we perhaps can't easily imagine how important that is, or was, for the villager of those days - and to some extent, even for the villager of these days, where there are any villagers left at all; as there are certainly in India, even now.

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Sona: It must have been similar in the large towns to quite an extent. It seemed to be the same in the large cities, even in London, some time ago - that the cities became so large they were divided up into sort of villages within the cities. I remember my parents especially being quite concerned about their reputation in those places, what the neighbours thought.

S: It is not so much what the neighbours thought, in a very narrow sense, because very often when you start thinking in those terms, 'What will the neighbours think?', you don't even know the neighbours. It is just the unknown Mrs Jones peering through the blinds and looking at what you're doing, but you have no contact with Mrs Jones. When we are speaking in those terms, it is a rather different situation that we have in mind, an alienated situation, in a way. But in the case of the village, or even the small town, you were in actual living contact with people, and it made a real difference what they thought and felt about you - whether you did enjoy public esteem and public approval in a healthy way.

Sona: It must have been like that a short time ago, I would have thought, for that perhaps to have been carried over and come in its narrower form.

S: I remember when I was in Helsinki, Vajrabodhi was commenting on the fact that in Finland people are much more careful of their good name than people are in England, according to him. He said this is a quite positive consideration for the Finns. They think very carefully about whether certain actions or behaviour of theirs will affect their good name in society; people are very conscious of this and very concerned about it - apparently, so far as I could gather from his account, in a quite healthy and positive way, not just as a fear of what the neighbours might say. He also pointed out that Helsinki, the capital, is still a small city; it's about half a million. And anybody who is anybody is in contact with everybody else who is anybody. It is definitely a unified community, as it were. And everybody knows what is

going on, everybody knows what everybody else is doing. And he says he is repeatedly coming across, in just ordinary society and social life, people who know what he is doing, who are quite aware that he is carrying on Buddhist activities. For instance, he said he went to his, I think he said, sister's place and there he met his sister's husband, who said, 'Oh yes, I know someone who goes to your classes.' He said this is happening all the time, because the society of Helsinki is as it were so small compared, say, with that of London, everybody knows everybody else. So therefore, he said, in such circumstances, people are much more careful of their good name, and they think before doing something, whether this would affect their good name or not. And they are very sensitive to any loss of good name. But he felt it operated in a quite healthy sort of way. He was pleased, especially, that the FWBO in Helsinki, to the extent that it has a name at all, has a good name - at least the word has got around that it's a friendly place, there's a good atmosphere there, people seem sincere and serious. In Finland, this is quite important, where there is so much criticism of any religious movement or group, or even ideology. The Finns are very free with their criticism, and there's not much you can do about it. They've hardly any such thing as a law of libel; people can write or print almost anything about anybody and there is no redress at all. It is only very recently that they have had even a flimsy law of libel, [493] but they have practically complete freedom to write anything they like about anybody and there is nothing you can do about it, even if it is a complete fabrication. So perhaps also that makes people there a bit more careful. But he felt that in England people were not so concerned about maintaining a good name. This attitude in Finland may well be not just because of the relatively small size of Helsinki, but due to the fact that until very recently practically everybody lived in small villages. Most of the people who live in Helsinki are, or their parents were, practically straight from the backwoods, and so they carry over quite a bit of that small town or village mentality - but perhaps in a positive way. So we see this sort of factor or consideration operating here. From the point of view of these housefathers it is a very cogent argument that, if you lead a moral life, an ethical life, you will enjoy a good reputation among your fellows, a good reputation in your village. You don't care what people in the next village think; you want the good opinion of people in your village, in this village, where you have to live and work all the time; unless, of course, you become a wanderer. No doubt this is one reason why some people did become wanderers: they found this sort of situation very petty, very stuffy, very narrow, especially if it was a very small village. This is why, according to the Pali Scriptures, you find people saying, 'A path of dust is the household life. Free as the air is the life of the wanderer.' And then, so thinking, they go forth. They shake the dust of the village from their feet and they just start wandering around. They get fed up with this narrow village life, where everybody knows everybody else and where you have to conform to some extent; so they become wanderers. But to those who remained in the village, who were living and working and bringing up their families in the village, it was a cogent argument of the Buddha's that if you led an ethical life you would enjoy the good opinion of your fellow villagers.

Then, thirdly, the fact that you are leading a virtuous life, the fact that you enjoy the good opinion of your fellows, will give you confidence in the village assemblies, at social gatherings. You will feel that you are a solid, worthy citizen and everybody esteems you. This will give you the confidence to speak your mind. You won't be abashed or ashamed when you enter into assemblies. This, for some reason, was very much insisted upon in the Buddha's time. We meet it again and again in the Pali Scriptures, that if you are leading an ethical life you will not feel abashed in the company of other people. It is as if to say that people were very conscious of the force of public opinion, or rather they attached quite a lot of importance

to your being as it were at ease socially; feeling that you were an equal among equals, not feeling ill at ease, not feeling abashed or shy or downcast; able to walk into any gathering with full confidence. Great importance seems to have been attached to this. Therefore, the Buddha points out that if you lead an ethical life and you enjoy the good opinion of your neighbours and fellow villagers, you will have this confidence which everybody considers so desirable.

Part of the reason behind this may be that, in those days, you had to speak up for yourself. Here is this community hall; it was used for transacting the judicial business of the clan. Right, supposing there was a dispute; then what would happen? There would be a meeting of the elders in the village hall, in the community hall, and the senior-most elder, the head man of the village, would preside. Then you would have to go and state your case yourself. There weren't any lawyers in those days; you would have to speak for yourself. And the other party [494] to the dispute would speak up for himself, and all your fellow villagers, or at least the elders, would be sitting there, people who knew you, and maybe they would be nodding approval at certain things you said and shaking their heads in disapproval at other things; and then they would give their opinion, pass their comments, and maybe ask questions, and eventually the presiding elder would pass some sort of judgement which was binding upon you both. So it was quite important in such situations that you should be able to speak up for yourself, that you should have self-confidence. Just as in the Greek world, the world of the Greek polis, the city state, where all the citizens, that is to say the free men of the city state, knew one another and assembled together - sometimes thousands of them - to transact public business. A man who had a forcible personality, who spoke well, could very easily become prominent and a leader, so the ability to speak in public became very important. Rhetoric became very important; rhetoric as the art of persuasion. And ambitious young men in the days of Socrates and Plato wanted to learn rhetoric. They wanted to be able to convince people, to influence them, to sway them, in these public assemblies, because, unless they could do this, they could not have a really outstanding political career, they couldn't wield power. That was power, the ability to sway the public assembly through your rhetoric. Hence you had teachers of rhetoric, and this is what many of the sophists were. Their wisdom was very often the wisdom of rhetoric and, as Socrates said, making the worse appear the better reasons. In this way sophistry got the meaning of false reasoning, because you wanted to sway the assembly your way, so you might make use of all sorts of specious arguments - even arguments in which you didn't believe, but you knew they would work, so you didn't hesitate to use them.

So, in primitive communities, even quite highly developed ones like those of the Greek city state, and certainly in the village communities of ancient India, boldness and confidence and the ability to speak in public assemblies was quite important. So therefore we find the Buddha saying that if you lead an ethical life and enjoy as a consequence a good name in your village, enjoy the good opinion of your fellow villagers, you will also be able to stick up for yourself, to speak out in any public matter in which you happen to be involved; and that is a good thing. You will enter assemblies and gatherings within your village, whether of brahmins or kshatriyas or vaisyas or sudras, with confidence. You won't be shy, you won't be abashed, you will be able to say forcibly what you have to say, and this will be a great social advantage.

So here again the argument *ad hominem*, as it's called: you would like to be wealthy, you would like to be respected, you would like to be influential. By leading a moral life, you will be able to be all these things; therefore you should lead a moral life. If someone says, 'No, I

don't want wealth. I don't care what people think of me. I don't want to speak out in public assemblies. I want nothing to do with public assemblies' - then, of course, this sort of argument falls flat, falls to the ground. But the Buddha knew, of course, to whom he was speaking. He knew his audience. He knew what sort of arguments would appeal to them, would convince them.

Fourthly, if you lead a virtuous life, you die a peaceful death. At the time of your death, there wouldn't be anything on your mind, or anything to reproach yourself with. You wouldn't have a bad conscience, so you wouldn't be afraid of what might happen afterwards. You would die peacefully, with your mind at rest, with a clear conscience, having [495] done your duty throughout your life, led a virtuous life, accumulated your wealth, brought up your children, enjoyed the esteem of your neighbours, wielded a certain amount of influence within your community, not done anyone any harm, not done any wrong, led a useful, virtuous life; you would die with a clear conscience. You would die peacefully. So he pointed that out as a fourth advantage, and the opposite, of course, as a disadvantage. And, of course, if you have led a virtuous life - here he introduces a directly religious argument - after death, after the break-up of the body, you would have a happy, heavenly rebirth. So he is leading them, as it were, step by step from the lower to the higher; from the lower consideration to the higher consideration. But you notice he breaks off there. He is speaking far into the night simply along these lines. It may be that those particular housefathers, though devoted to the Buddha, were quite a worldly lot, and maybe they needed quite a lot of impressing, as it were. So he was speaking until far into the night simply on these topics, simply inculcating sila, simply inculcating skilful action or very down-to-earth, worldly, practical reasons, for the most part. But he couldn't get any further than that, apparently. He couldn't go on even to things like dana; certainly not on to meditation, and certainly not on to topics like the Four Noble Truths. So he does what he can, he does his best, and then he brings the discourse to a conclusion. He says: 'Now housefathers, the night is far spent. Do whatsoever seems good to you,' which was the customary formula. 'So the layfollowers of Pataligama, delighted with the words of the Exalted One' - at least the Buddha had made a good impression - 'returned thanks, rose up from their seats, saluted the Exalted One with the right side and went away.'

So at least the Buddha has laid the foundations; at least he has impressed upon their minds the importance of sila, and they have accepted that and been quite happy about it.

Now the laypeople having withdrawn, something quite interesting occurs. Remember Pataligama was at that time just a small village, but it was, so far as we know, strategically situated. You may remember that the Kingdom of Magadha was expanding, and at that time the king was thinking about swallowing up the confederacy of the Vajjians, which was a confederacy of, I think, 18 different tribes; so this was a quite strong confederacy. But Ajatasatru, the king of Magadha, was thinking of trying to break up the alliance of these 18 tribes - I think it was 18, you will have to check this - and in this way gradually swallow them all up. At that time also the capital of Magadha was not Pataligama - as I said, that was only a small village - it was Rajagaha or Rajgir. But at that time, in view of the fact that Magadha wanted to extend itself, wanted to conquer the Vajjian confederacy and seize their territory, two ministers of the king were strengthening and enlarging the village of Pataligama, which was on the border as it were. It is not quite clear in detail why they were actually doing this, but according to some authorities they wanted to make a sort of fortress, almost, there, and from there launch an attack on the Vajjians. Here it says that these two ministers were 'building a town on the site of Pataligama, for keeping off the Vajjians', which suggests that

they were expecting an attack. But we never read about the Vajjians thinking of attacking the kingdom of Magadha; it is always the other way round. So maybe it is the well-known argument of the conqueror - 'this is all for defensive purposes' - while actually the real purpose is offensive.

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Anyway they were building this town on the site of the village, and we are told also that great numbers of devatas, of gods or spirits, had gathered there. And we are further told, as a sort of piece of folklore or folk wisdom, that wherever devatas settle or gather they bend the minds of ministers and others to building there. This is rather interesting. We are told that the Buddha sees this, and from the fact that there are so many devatas gathered together, he first foresees and then he foretells that there will be a great city on that site. According to the translator, according to Western scholars, this is not a real prophecy but just shows that, later on when Pataligama had become a great city, this episode was inserted into the Scriptures; there isn't a real prophecy. But it is difficult to say; we mustn't jump to that kind of rationalistic conclusion too easily.

But the Buddha sees that there are, as it were, other forces at work - this is probably the best way of putting it - that there are even psychic forces at work, causing people to build at one spot rather than another. It is as though there are certain energies at certain spots, and people are influenced to build and settle there by those energies. So the Buddha sees that there is a quite powerful complex of energies at that particular spot, and he sees that those energies are drawing the minds of ministers and others to build there, to settle there; and therefore he sees that there is going to be a great city on that site. But he predicts various kinds of disaster for that city in the future.

Has anyone got any comment on all that?

Devaraja: It says they had taken counsel with the devas of the Thirty-three - that's the two ministers, presumably?

S: No, the other devatas, I think. It is as if to say that what happens on this earth, on the historical plane as it were, is affected, not to say even sparked off, by happenings on higher planes: higher, though of course still mundane. It does seem odd, in a way, because one sees that there are certain sites where people build again and again and again, even though the buildings, the villages or towns or cities, may be destroyed again and again. They just go on building and rebuilding. And there are other spots, apparently quite pleasant, suitable spots, where they seem never to think of building. So the question arises: why? What are the factors at work? This passage suggests that there are factors at work which are, for want of a better term, psychical or spiritual in the more ordinary sense of the term; that people's minds are moved to settle there, to build there, by forces - even psychic forces or subtle energies - of which they are not altogether conscious. They don't know what is moving them or motivating them.

ABC: Are those forces generally useful - say, if you were thinking of building a centre or something?

S: Well, the Buddha does say in the verses he recites by way of thanksgiving that one should be as it were on good terms with those forces; but also there is a quite widespread belief, not

to say teaching, in Buddhist circles, that this only affects as it were the worldly. If it is something purely spiritual, you need not bother too much. Though traditionally, very often, in the Buddhist countries, they do bother quite a lot even where spiritual things are concerned. They like to choose a site for [497] a monastery or temple according to these sort of considerations, according to the influences which prevail there. But obviously, one can lose oneself in this sort of thing, just as in a sort of maze, and forget the more important things. But certainly some spots feel as if they were more positive than others. You could say, even, that the sort of spirits that move men to build great cities may not be very healthy spirits; certainly not very 'spiritual' spirits, if one can use that expression; maybe rather asura-like, wanting a big city to be built and moving men's minds to build a big city where there will be a lot of trade, a lot of wealth, a lot of power. One isn't necessarily to go along with this sort of thing. One can see the influence, recognize it, and refuse to go along with it. One doesn't have to go along with it. But the Buddha does suggest, in this verse which he recites by way of thanksgiving, that one should be as it were on good terms with the local devas:

'To all the devas dwelling there let him make offerings. Thus honoured, they will honour him: revered, they'll him revere.'

Perhaps it simply means one should have a positive attitude towards one's environment; feel for it, not just use it in a selfish way. Then one could apply this as it were ecologically. If you worshipped the spirits of the trees all round about, you could hardly go on cutting down the trees ruthlessly until there were no trees left.

So perhaps it really suggests not very much more than sensitiveness, almost a sort of reverential attitude, towards one's whole environment, not just pillaging it in a selfish exploitive way. Perhaps it also means that one should be sensitive to all the influences by which one is surrounded and harmonize with them, where they are positive and healthy. Very clearly, the Buddha suggests that if your overall attitude towards the forces of nature is positive and healthy, the forces of nature will co-operate with you.

Obviously, one shouldn't carry this too far, it shouldn't become anything fanciful; but there is a certain amount of traditional wisdom in it, we may say. But you also notice that the Buddha says in these thanksgiving verses:

'In whatsoever place the prudent man shall make his home, Here let him feed good men controlled who live the Brahma-life.'

This is the more important consideration - that the householder, the one who is living and working and earning and producing, shouldn't do so only for himself, or even only for his family. He should also support or help to support the wanderers, those who wander from place to place, those who live on alms, 'good men controlled who live the Brahma-life', who are leading a spiritual life, following the path of the Higher Evolution. So this comes first, before making offerings to devas. And then the Buddha says: 'To all the devas dwelling there let him make offerings. / Thus honoured, they will honour him; revered, they'll him revere. / As a mother doth compassionate the child that she hath borne, / He whom devas compassionate doth ever see good luck.' So the more important thing for the householder is to support the wanderers. In other words, out of the surplus of your material activities, contribute to those activities which are not necessary merely to the maintenance of life, even if those activities are being carried on by [498] other people, not by you.

Any query on that episode so far? (Silence.) It seems in a way a slightly mundane episode so far. The Buddha is wandering, he is on his rounds, he is entertained by these village folk. He gives a very down-to-earth, practical discourse. He has to confine himself just to matters of ethics. Then he is entertained by the great officials who are building a town on the site of that village, and he sees that there are other, as it were psychic, factors involved in the building of that town. He draws attention to these, he mentions them to Ananda. Then he is entertained to a meal by those two great officials. He thanks them. He draws attention to the importance of supporting the holy men, the importance of remaining on positive terms with one's environment. But no more than that; no definitely spiritual note is struck here, except that it is pointed out that the householders should help support the wanderers. Perhaps he doesn't even say 'the wanderers' in that sense; he says 'those who live the Brahma-life', whether they are wanderers or not, presumably. But normally it would only be wanderers who come to his door for alms.

Then there is that little incident of the gates being named after the Buddha, and also the Buddha crossing the river Ganges, apparently by the exercise of his supernormal power; and that leads us on to the actual udana, the verse:

'To cross the pool, the flood, to span the swamps they make a bridge. See! folk bind their bundle! Sages have already crossed.' What do you think that means? It suggests, as it were, that while everybody else is just getting ready to develop, getting ready to follow the spiritual life, all the sages are actually doing that; in fact, they've done it. They've done it while you're making the preparations! Nothing really supernormal or magical about it. They have simply got down to the whole business of leading the spiritual life and following the path of the Higher Evolution in a more practical, businesslike manner than you have. They've been getting on with the job while you've perhaps just been talking about it or thinking about it or making preparations; while you've been doing all those things they've actually been living the spiritual life, actually following the path of the Higher Evolution.

: It connects up, perhaps, with the beginning of this sutta, the discourse on sila.

S: Right. Anyway, any further queries on this episode? We are not told exactly when it was; probably towards the end of the Buddha's life, when there was quite a bit of tension between the kingdom of Magadha on the one side and the Vajjian confederacy on the other, between the expanding kingdom absorbing the neighbouring states and the confederacy of republican tribes that did not want to be absorbed, but which were absorbed eventually.

Sona: Which state did he die in?

S: In the territory of the Mallas. The Mallas were a republican tribe in the neighbourhood of Kusinara, that is to say what is now the northern part of the United Provinces, Uttar Pradesh, not very many miles from South Central Nepal.

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So in a way we get a glimpse here into the future, the future of Pataliputra, with perhaps a suggestion of the very great expansion that awaits Buddhism in the future. With the mention of Pataligama, which is going to become Pataliputra, at once Asoka is brought to mind, and Asoka's subcontinent-wide empire; and also his dissemination of the Buddha's teaching far beyond the boundaries of India. So here perhaps we do get a little glimpse of the future and

start becoming aware and mindful, just before the Buddha's death, of those possibilities.

ABC: Was Pataligama to become the capital?

S: Yes, that became the capital of the whole Magadha empire. It is there that the Greek envoys went in the time of Chandragupta Maurya. So we get a hint here not only of the expansion of Pataligama into Pataliputra - the little village into the capital of a great empire - but also perhaps of the expansion of Buddhism itself from the teaching of a comparatively obscure Indian teacher into what we may describe as a universal religion, a world religion, for want of a better term.

The more one goes through the Udana, the more one feels that there is a definite editorial skill at work here. You will notice that again in a few minutes.

I think we'll go on now. We have been going on now for three hours, so we haven't very much more time left; in fact, not many more pages to do. Let's go straight on.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was travelling on the highroad among the Kosalans with the venerable Nagasamala as his personal attendant. And as they went along the venerable Nagasamala saw a branch-road. On seeing it he said to the Exalted One, 'O Exalted One! that is the road, sir. Let us go by that road.'

At these words the Exalted One replied, 'This is the road, Nagasamala. Let us go by this road.'

And a second time the venerable Nagasamala said, 'That is the road ... ' And a second time the Exalted One replied, 'This is the road, Nagasamala. Let us go by this road.' And yet a third time the venerable Nagasamala repeated his words, and a third time the Exalted One replied, 'This is the road, Nagasamala. Let us go by this road.' Thereupon the venerable Nagasamala set down the Exalted One's bowl and robe just there upon the ground and went away, saying, 'Here, Exalted One, are your bowl and robe, sir.'

Now it came to pass that as the venerable Nagasamala went along that road robbers fell upon him as he journeyed and beat and kicked him, broke his bowl and tore his robes to tatters. Then the venerable Nagasamala, with broken bowl and torn robes, went back to the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted [500] him and sat down at one side. As he sat thus the venerable Nagasamala said this to the Exalted One: 'Sir, as I went along that road, robbers fell upon me as I journeyed, beat and kicked me, broke my bowl and tore my robes to tatters.'

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Jogging along in company With the blockhead the sage rubs shoulders. When he finds he's a rogue, straightway he leaves him, As a milk-fed heron abandons the water.'

S: Clearly, one can take this little episode in two ways, or in both even. You can take it literally or you can take it allegorically, or both. The episode seems to belong to the period before the last 25 years of the Buddha's life, because Ananda is not in attendance as he was always during the last 25 years of the Buddha's life. It is another monk, Nagasamala. So Nagasamala and the Buddha have a disagreement as to which is the right way to go when they

reach a fork in the road, apparently. The Buddha says, 'It's this way.' Nagasamala says, 'No, it's that way.' And one would have thought that, whatever Nagasamala might have thought himself, he would have gone along with the Buddha, but he doesn't do that because he is so obstinate that he is prepared even to leave the Buddha there and go on by himself. And, of course, being the attendant, he has been carrying the Buddha's spare robe and his bowl, so he just puts them down. And you notice he observes the formalities, though is being completely disobedient and obstinate and stupid, but he still says, 'Here, Exalted One, are your bowl and robe, sir.' So what is the use, one might say, of keeping up these formalities and being quite polite when you are being thoroughly disobedient and stupid at the same time?

But, anyway, retribution is in store for Nagasamala, as one might have expected. Robbers fall upon him, he is beaten, kicked and - a stroke of poetic justice, since he put the Buddha's bowl down on the ground - his bowl is broken; and, since he put the Buddha's spare robe on the ground, his robes are torn to tatters. So, like that, he has to come back to the Buddha, salutes him and sits down at one side - very subdued, probably. And then he tells the Buddha what happened. And the Buddha doesn't make any direct comment. He merely says:

'Jogging along in company With the blockhead' ...

that, presumably, refers to Nagasamala ...

'the sage rubs shoulders. When he finds he's a rogue, straightway he leaves him, As a milk-fed heron abandons the water.'

There are quite a few references in the Pali Scriptures - in the Dhammapada too - about the painful experiences that come upon one through keeping company with a fool, with the spiritually immature person. But here the [501] Buddha is just making that sort of general comment, as if to say, 'Well, what was I to expect? This Nagasamala is a fool, he is spiritually immature. Here am I jogging along with him, walking with him from place to place. What else could I expect? It would be better, in fact, to leave him and go on by myself.'

ABC: What does it refer to when it says, 'When he finds he's a rogue'?

S: Perhaps that doesn't apply exactly to Nagasamala himself. Perhaps that is a more general statement. He just is no good, as it were, no fit company for a wise man; not intent upon his own development. I don't know what the original Pali word is there. Of course, you can look at it allegorically in this sense: the Buddha says, 'That's the path, that's the way, that's the Middle Way, that's the Eightfold Path', but then you go some other way and, of course, sooner or later you come to grief.

Of course, you have to be very careful not to interpret this in a sort of authoritarian way - 'The Buddha knows best. You mustn't do anything that the Buddha says that you mustn't. You must always obey the Buddha. You must always be a good, obedient monk.' You must be very careful not to interpret it in this sort of rather woolly, goody-goody fashion.

Subhuti: It describes him as a blockhead - I don't know what it actually comes from, but it is ignorance rather than moral culpability that's pointed out.

S: Yes. Anna-jano, according to the footnote - 'one who doesn't know'; it's an ignorant person.

The commentary says: 'anno ti, atano hitam na janati', which means 'one who does not know what is good for him, who does not know what constitutes his own good'. He is the blockhead.

ABC: What does 'Nagasamala' mean, translated?

S: 'Naga' is, of course, serpent; 'mala' is garland. I am not sure about the significance of the 'sa'. It could mean a serpent garland - a serpent as a garland; it could mean something like that. How he came by the name we are not told. He no doubt brought it over from his lay life. Any further query on this?

: Can you say something about the heron?

S: Well, there is a little note here: 'Comy. states that if the crane (or heron) tastes mingled milk and water, it separates them, taking the milk.' This is often cited. The same thing is said about the hamsa, the swan or goose, that it separates milk from water. It is usually considered to represent the separation of the essential from the inessential, so if you have been accustomed to faring on the essential, you will reject the inessential. If you have been used to milk, you will reject water; milk is something better than water. So if you bring up a heron to drink milk rather than water, it will abandon the water eventually; so the wise man is like that. Just as the heron that has been brought up on milk will abandon the water for the milk, so the wise man will abandon the company of fools. He has been brought up, as it were, on the company of the wise - certainly on the company of skilful mental states; his [502] own mental states, at least. So he won't care for the company of the fool.

This again draws attention, though here in a rather negative way, to the importance of kalyana mitrata. The Buddha says sometimes, as in the Dhammapada, that if you can't find good spiritual company it is better to be on your own, rather than have the company of fools, that is to say the spiritually immature or those who don't know what constitutes their own good or those who don't care about the spiritual life. If you can't find a good companion, a true spiritual friend, fare on alone: that is better. Of course, if you can find spiritual friends, that's best. But it is as though the Buddha has three grades or three levels. The best is to fare on in the company of spiritual friends, the second best is to fare on alone. And the third best, or the worst, in fact, is to be trying to fare on in the company of fools - those who don't know what is good for them or good for you, and who have no real interest in the spiritual life. Better than that is to fare on alone. Just the worst situation of all, you could say, is to be a fool with another fool.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi in East Park, at the storeyed house of Migara's mother.

Now at that time the dear and lovely grand-daughter of Visakha, Migara's mother, had died. So Visakha, Migara's mother, with clothes and hair still wet (from washing), came at an unseasonable hour to see the Exalted One, and on coning to him, saluted him and sat down at one side. As she sat thus the Exalted One said this to Visakha, Migara's mother:

'Why, Visakha! How is it that you come here with clothes and hair still wet at an unseasonable hour?'

'O, sir, my dear and lovely grand-daughter is dead! That is why I come here with hair and clothes still wet at an unseasonable hour.'

'Visakha, would you like to have as many sons and grandsons as there are men in Savatthi?'

'Yes, sir, I would indeed!'

'But how many men do you suppose die daily in Savatthi?' 'Ten, sir, or maybe nine, or eight. Maybe seven, sir, five or four, three, two; maybe one a day dies in Savatthi, sir. Savatthi is never free from men dying, sir.'

'What think you Visakha? In such case would you ever be without wet hair and clothes?'

'Surely not, sir! Enough for me, sir, of so many sons and grandsons!'

'Visakha, whoso have a hundred things beloved, they have a hundred sorrows. Whoso have ninety, eighty ... thirty, twenty things beloved ... whoso have ten ... whoso have but one thing beloved, have but one sorrow. Whoso have no one thing beloved, they have no sorrow. Sorrowless are they and passionless. Serene are they, I declare.'

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(Text omits the usual phrase here.)

All griefs or lamentations whatsoever And divers forms of sorrow in the world, Because of what is dear do these become. Thing dear not being, these do not become. Happy are they therefore and free from grief To whom is naught at all dear in the world. Wherefore aspiring for the griefless, sorrowless, Make thou in all the world naught dear to thee.'

S: Here we are concerned with the subject of death, and the reason for that is obvious. This is a little like an episode we have had before, where people come with hair and clothes wet after taking the purificatory bath which people used to take and, in fact, still do take in India, after cremating a dead body. So Visakha has had to attend to the cremation of a 'dear and lovely granddaughter'. In modern India, at least, women never have anything to do with funerals and cremations. Very likely they didn't usually even in the Buddha's day, but Visakha, we know, was a very independent and strong-minded woman, very capable and businesslike, so it may well be that she acted more or less like a man on this occasion - that she, too, accompanied the corpse and attended the cremation and afterwards went and had a purificatory bath. Then she comes to see the Buddha. So the Buddha at once goes to the root of it all. He asks: 'Would you like to have as many sons and grandsons' - you notice he doesn't say 'daughters and granddaughters' - 'as there are men in Savatthi?' And Visakha, despite her piety, is so as it were biologically greedy - you know, she has such a lust for reproduction and multiplying the human race - that she really likes this idea of having hundreds and thousands of sons and grandsons with herself as sort of super-matriarch of them all. So she says, 'Yes, sir, I would indeed' - 'I'd like to have these hundreds of sons and grandsons, maybe even thousands, as many as there are men in Savatthi.' This is as it were nature speaking. Visakha is nature incarnate, it is nature speaking through her mouth, and saying, 'Let's multiply. The more men and women there are in the world the better.' But then what does the Buddha say? But, Visakha, he says, 'Just think how many men die in Savatthi every day.' That's the other side of the coin: the other side of the coin of birth is death. 'So all right, you'd have these hundreds

and thousands of sons and grandsons, as many as the men of Savatthi, but you would also have so many deaths every day.' And then he says, in, we may imagine, a slightly ironic or humorous manner, 'You'd never be without wet hair and wet clothes!' You know, 'You'd be taking these purificatory dips every day if you had hundreds and thousands of sons and grandsons, not to speak of daughters and granddaughters. There would be a funeral every day, maybe two or three funerals every day. You'd be constantly dipping in the water. You'd always have wet hair and wet clothes. What do you think of that?' She hadn't thought of that. She'd only thought of life, she hadn't thought of death. She'd not seen the other side of the coin. But now she sees it, so she says, 'Surely not, sir. Enough for me, sir, of so many sons and grandsons!' She is quite quick to see the point, once the Buddha puts it to her. Then the Buddha generalizes and says: 'Visakha, whoso have a hundred things beloved, they have a hundred sorrows.' When he says 'things beloved', he means things to which you are attached, neurotically attached. So, in [504] that sense, if you have a hundred things that are beloved, you have a hundred sorrows; ninety things beloved, ninety sorrows; and so on, until 'ten things beloved', only ten sorrows; one thing beloved, only one sorrow. And no thing beloved, no sorrow.

We have to be quite careful how we read or interpret this passage. It does not exclude positive skilful emotions. It is only excluding attachment. As I pointed out before, in Buddhism, in Pali, there are two distinct words - for friendly love and for what we may describe as neurotic love. Friendly love is metta, maitri - and of that obviously, you can't have too much, like mindfulness. There should be metta, love, friendliness, kindness, joy, all these things, but not attachment. That is called pema, sometimes sneha. That is a quite different thing; that is sort of infatuation. It is not love, it is not friendliness, it is not positive, and it can be very painful. So the Buddha is not saying you shouldn't be friendly, you shouldn't be kind, you shouldn't have positive emotions. He is saying you shouldn't have attachment, you shouldn't have infatuations, (because) then you will have sorrows. Visakha apparently didn't just have an objective, positive metta towards her granddaughter; she was attached, and she suffered when she died, for that reason. So the fact that one is advised not to develop attachment doesn't mean that one shouldn't cultivate friendliness in the sense of metta. Unfortunately, if we translate metta by 'friendliness', which is quite literal, it seems a bit weak, but that is just because in English the whole conception of friendliness is weak. It has been rather overpowered, or rather overshadowed, at least, by its rather negative, vague counterpart, which is 'love'.

Devaraja: You used another word as well as pema. What was that?

S: Sneha.

Devaraja: That has the same - ?

S: Yes. Pema and sneha are much the same. Often, of course, metta is translated as 'love', but that is very misleading, because 'love' has an ambiguity which the word metta just doesn't have. The meaning of metta is crystal clear, it is connected with mitra, which is 'friend'. And friendship in ancient India was a much more positive emotion than it seems to be in the modern West. We think of friendship as something quite tepid and ordinary, not really an emotion at all, not much more than a sort of liking, which develops upon acquaintance. But metta is in fact a very strong word, a very powerful word, a very positive word. So this we're advised to develop and cultivate to the best of our ability; but not attachment.

It is very important to see this difference: metta and pema. Both in English can be translated as 'love'. In some translations of the Dhammapada, pema is rendered as 'affection', which is a bit unfortunate, because sometimes affection is a quite positive sort of thing - not very strong, but as far as it goes positive. We really need another word in English; something with the same sort of meaning as friendliness, but with a much more positive, much more powerful connotation, a much more definite flavour to it.

: I think within the Friends the word 'metta' itself is being used as an English word.

S: Yes, it may end up as an English word; find its way into the Oxford [505] English Dictionary, along with nirvana and karma - slightly distorted, unfortunately, in the case of those two words. But it is a nice easy word, short and simple, quite easy to spell; and maitri, of course, in Sanskrit.

So, whatever the Buddha says about attachment, one certainly shouldn't read that as excluding or discouraging metta.

Any query on that? (Silence.) The verse seems to be quite straight-forward: (reads verse)

Again, this word 'dear' could be misunderstood. It certainly doesn't mean that you shouldn't have positive emotions, positive feelings, towards other people, but they should be skilful positive feelings. Once again we come up against the rather negative mode of expression of some, at least, of the Pali Canon. But elsewhere in the same Pali Canon, the importance of metta and the desirability of its cultivation is quite strongly insisted upon. And very often, unfortunately, people take metta as an excuse for pema, just through the ambiguity of this word 'love'; there is so much confusion on this score. If you use the word 'love', then in the guise of metta you can smuggle in pema, which isn't at all desirable.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground. And on that occasion the venerable Dabba of the Mallas came to see the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down at one side. As he thus sat the venerable Dabba said this to the Exalted One: 'Now is the time for my utter passing away, Wellfarer.'

'Do what you deem it time for, Dabba.'

Accordingly the venerable Dabba of the Mallas rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side, rose into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, attained the sphere of heat, and rising from it passed finally away.

Now when the venerable Dabba of the Mallas had risen into the air, and after sitting cross-legged in the sky and attaining the sphere of heat, had risen from it and passed finally away, his body was consumed, burned up utterly, so that not an atom of ash or soot was to be seen. Just as, for instance, when ghee or oil is consumed and burned utterly, not an atom of ash or soot is to be seen, even so, when the venerable Dabba of the Mallas had risen into the air ... not an atom of ash or soot was to be seen.

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Broken is body, perceiving is dissolved, All feelings cooled, component parts have ceased,
And consciousness of mind has reached its end.'

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S: This is quite interesting. Once again we are concerned with death, and not so many episodes ago we came very near the Buddha's own death or decease - in fact, to within a few hours of it - but the Udana doesn't go further than that so far as the Buddha is concerned. It is rather interesting. It is as though (the compiler) doesn't want to say anything directly about the decease of the Buddha. Why do you think that might be?

Sona: The Buddha couldn't have spoken a word of uplift.

S: The Buddha couldn't have spoken a word of uplift; yes, that's true. (Laughter.) And you notice the Buddha has the last word, if you go on to the next section, section x; the Buddha does have the last word, but it's not about his own death, it's about somebody else's death. So if you exclude the Buddha's own parinirvana, you leave the Buddha with the last word, as it were. But you could have had an episode dealing with the parinirvana before the end, because the text is not strictly chronological in its arrangement. So it is almost as though the collection was compiled quite soon after the Buddha's decease, and the thought or the idea of the Buddha having passed away was still quite painful, perhaps, and so the compilers don't like as it were to bring it in very directly. They carry you just within a few hours of the Buddha's death, but they don't actually say anything about the passing away. Instead, there's a little episode about death in general, and then somebody else's death, and then, in the final episode, the Buddha again commenting upon that. So death is brought in, the Buddha is brought in. The Buddha also gets the final udana. You are left, as it were, with the suggestion of death, also with the awareness that the Buddha has passed away; but there is nothing directly stated.

: Did Dabba die within a few hours of when the Buddha died - you said 'within a few hours'?

S: No, the Buddha died within a few hours of the episode of Cunda etc. described in a previous episode. So we are taken as far as that, up to the last 24 hours of the Buddha's life, but no further. The text then switches to somebody else's death, and the Buddha's comments upon that. It is as though the compilers don't want actually to approach the subject of the Buddha's own death, not directly; only indirectly. And this is quite interesting. Here we get the as it were legendary or mythical symbolical element that is very rare in the Udana. I have gone into one or two of these sort of elements previously, in some of the lectures.

'And on that occasion the venerable Dabba of the Mallas came to see the Exalted One, and on coming to him saluted him and sat down on one side. As he thus sat the venerable Dabba said this to the Exalted One: 'Now is the time for my utter passing away, Wellfarer.'

'Do what you deem it time for, Dabba.'

Accordingly the venerable Dabba of the Mallas rose from his seat, saluted the Exalted One with his right side, rose into the air' ...

We find the Buddha rising into the air when he performed the yamaka iddhi, the double or twin miracle, that is to say the miracle or supernatural feat of emitting from his body alternately fire and water, flames of fire [507] and streams of water, and we saw that that had

a significance: the Buddha rising into the air represents the fact that whatever happens after he has risen into the air happens as it were on another plane. It's on another dimension, it's not to be taken literally, it's not historical. So perhaps we can say this also of Dabba the Malla's rising into the air. We pass from the historical to the as it were archetypal. It is an archetypal death, a sort of spiritual death, if you like. Don't forget, we are still in a way concerned with the Buddha's parinirvana; and the Buddha's death would be a special kind of death, a special kind of passing away, because he was the Buddha. It would be a parinirvana. I mentioned the other day the distinction between nirvana and parinirvana; Nirvana representing the purely transcendental spiritual attainment of Nirvana or Buddhahood, and parinirvana representing the dropping away of the physical body. So what was going to happen, or what had happened, perhaps, in the Buddha's case, was the dropping away of the physical body, and his death simply meant that; no change in the mental state, no change in the spiritual state. He remained the Buddha. But whereas before he was a Buddha with a body, now he is a Buddha without a body. That's the only difference. So the body disappears - in other words, everything conditioned. So the disappearance of the body, in the Buddha's case symbolizes the final disappearance of everything conditioned. And this is also what this miracle performed by Dabba seems to represent, his miraculous death and disappearance: there is no body left. He consumes himself. The body is burned up. So this as it were symbolizes the burning up of everything conditioned consequent upon one's attainment of the Unconditioned. So it is suggested that this is what the Buddha has done. Dabba the Malla simply consumes his physical body, if we take it literally. The Buddha, however, has consumed everything conditioned in his own nature, and he is now purely the Unconditioned. So perhaps this episode of Dabba the Malla is meant to throw light on or to reflect the Buddha's own parinirvana and to bring out its significance, as it were: that it is a parinirvana, not an ordinary death, not an ordinary passing away. It is symbolical of something spiritual. In the case of the Buddha it is in fact something spiritual. Or perhaps the whole episode is meant to draw our attention from physical death, the death of the body, to spiritual death, the complete disappearance of the conditioned, of the mundane, so that only the Unconditioned is left, as in the case of the Buddha: when he 'dies', only the Unconditioned side as it were of his nature is left. There is no difference between the Buddha as Buddha during his lifetime and as it were after his death. The only difference is, before, there is a physical body; after, there is no physical body; but everything else remains unchanged, because the conditioned has been exhausted long ago, presumably at the time of the Buddha's Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

So perhaps this episode of Dabba the Malla comes here to draw our attention away from the physical fact of the Buddha's death, and to direct our attention to the more spiritual dimension, and even the spiritual significance of the Buddha's death - that, in a sense, it wasn't a death; spiritually speaking, he died when he gained Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. So he isn't really dying now, it's only the old physical body, the worn-out physical body dropping off after 80 years. But the Buddha as Buddha is, as it were - we don't want to be too existentialist here - the Buddha as Buddha is still there. The Buddha doesn't die. So perhaps, very skilfully and very indirectly, the compiler is suggesting something like this. [508] Sona: When it says with regard to Dabba, 'It is now time for my utter passing away', doesn't that imply that that is his parinirvana?

S: Yes, 'utter passing away' is a translation of parinirvana. But what happens in the case of Dabba is that we see what appears to be a literal burning up of the physical body, and this burning up of Dabba's physical body without residue, without remainder, becomes as it were

a symbol of the Buddha's, or any Enlightened person's, burning up of the conditioned so as to leave only the Unconditioned which can't be expressed. So it seems quite a skilful piece of editing, in a way.

Also inasmuch as our direct attention is shifted from the Buddha's death to Dabba's death, it enables the Buddha to have the last word, so that the whole text concludes with an udana of the Buddha. So, as it's the last one, I think I'll read it myself.

'Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi, at Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. Then the Exalted One called to the monks, saying, 'Monks!'

'Yes, sir,' replied those monks to the Exalted One. The Exalted One said this: 'Monks, when Dabba of the Mallas rose into the air (as in previous sutta) ... not an atom of ash or soot was to be seen. Just as, for instance, when ghee or oil is consumed, utterly burned up ... so was it in the case of Dabba of the Mallas.'

Thereupon the Exalted One at that time, seeing the meaning of it, gave utterance to this verse of uplift:

Just as the bourn of a blazing spark of fire
Struck from the anvil, gradually fading,
Cannot be known, - so in the case of those
Who've rightly won release and crossed the flood
Of lusts that bind, and reached the bliss unshaken,
The bourn they've won cannot be pointed to.'

So, in a word, the Buddha has the last word about Dabba and, by implication, about himself. The state of the Enlightened One, the state of the Buddha, he says here as he has said elsewhere, after death cannot be fathomed. And it cannot be fathomed not on account of the death; it cannot be fathomed because it cannot be fathomed even during life. So it's as though there is nothing more to be said. The Buddha has not only gained Enlightenment; the physical body which was associated with that Enlightened state for 45 years has now dropped off. There is only the Enlightened state left, only as it were the Enlightened Mind left. But you can't say what that Enlightened mind is like. It is as it were unfathomable, indescribable.

So, by this rather ingenious device, the compiler has the Buddha virtually commenting upon his own parinirvana. So it is quite a good piece of editing and quite a skilfully, very sensitively, put together [509] anthology, the Udana as a whole. It has carried us practically through the Buddha's entire life; certainly from just shortly after his Enlightenment to up to shortly before his physical death. It gives us many episodes in between, many teachings; enables us to see the spread of the teaching, the consolidation of the Order, and much of the social and religious and even political and economic life of India and closes on this rather solemn and even inspiring note.

It is interesting also what the Buddha says about 'the bourn of a blazing spark of fire / Struck from the anvil, gradually fading, / Cannot be known'. It is not that when the spark dies there is nothing left. The spark passes into a state which cannot be perceived. One scholar has pointed out that we must bear in mind always the ancient Indian conception of fire: that when a fire was extinguished, it didn't go out in the sense that it was just cut off it ceased to exist: (but) it passed from a gross to a subtle state. And this is the significance of what the Buddha says here. The spark having gone out exists in a subtle state which cannot be apprehended, cannot be seen. The Buddha's physical body having disappeared, the Buddha, as it were, the Buddha

Mind, exists now in a subtle state as it were, a purely spiritual purely transcendental state, which cannot be perceived by the unenlightened person.

Also it is quite interesting that there is a reference in the last line but one to 'the bliss unshaken'. It is as if we are left with a quite positive impression: 'so in the case of those Who've rightly won release and crossed the flood / Of lusts that bind, and reached the bliss unshaken, / The bourn they've won cannot be pointed to.' So there is a definite, very positive reference; it is a state of bliss that has been attained, a state of extreme happiness, something highly positive, not just a cessation of suffering. So, even though there have been many negative expressions in the course of the udana, many quite negative ways of putting things, it closes at least on a very positive note - just as it began on a very positive note. It began, we may say, with the Buddha under the Bodhi tree; it began with a statement of the spiritual idea in quite positive terms, using the old word brahmin or brahmana, and it closes with a reference not only to the inexpressible nature of the Enlightened state when there is no physical body there any longer, but with a quite definite and decided reference to it being a state of unshakeable bliss, which is very positive indeed, as I said. So that when you get rid of lusts, you don't just have a state of no-lusts, you have a state of positive bliss which is unshakeable and indescribable. So it is as though the compiler wants to leave us in the end with a quite positive impression. No doubt he is very wise in wanting to do that.

Any query on those two episodes?

Devaraja: What you were saying about the miracle, does that mean that, to perceive a miraculous event performed by the Buddha, one has to kind of ascend to the same level?

S: Well, no, you can perceive a miraculous event as miraculous, if it does occur, without ascending to any level at all. If you take it literally, well, there's the Buddha up in the air and you are seeing him up in the air. But if you take it as having a symbolical meaning, he is not up in the air; what is happening is happening on a quite different plane. It is a question of understanding what is happening. You could adopt the view which is the usual Buddhist view, though not very explicitly [510] expressed, that it happens miraculously and it has a symbolical meaning, too. So that crowds of people see the Buddha up there in the air walking to and fro; but it also has a symbolical meaning. But the modern, more rationalistic person might choose to reject the literal happening and just consider the symbolical meaning. And it is rather noticeable that in the Udana we have very little indeed of the symbolical in this way. And significantly, it is always, as far as I recollect, to do with the elements: either with water or with fire, either crossing water or freeing a choked well, or the burning up of the body with fire. In the Udana the miraculous element, again as far as I recollect, seems to be associated with these two elements, which to my mind is quite suspicious - well, perhaps I should say significant! - because water and fire themselves are highly symbolical, they are opposites.

So you could say that the Udana begins with Enlightenment and ends with Enlightenment. Perhaps we could say that the compilers are careful not to end on a negative note, that is to say not to end even on the note of the Buddha's physical death, which could perhaps be taken rather negatively, the end of the story. No, the compiler ends on a very positive note. You begin with Enlightenment with the body still there, and you end with Enlightenment with the body no longer there. And the Udana as such tells you what the Buddha did in between...

Any query or comment on the text as a whole? Any sort of residual impressions? Perhaps it's

a bit premature. You need a few weeks to think about it.

Sona: I have had the feeling throughout this that - even though the Udana is so good - there seems to be some lack of compassion towards others. It suddenly occurred to me, because I've often tried to fit the Bodhisattvas into the whole spiritual structure, but it's rather like the whole evolutionary process: you have like the guide who is as it were leading the people across the desert, and he goes first, and then - I don't know whether one could look at it like this, but ... (Break of 6 or 7 seconds in recording)

S: ... the impression I get, reading the Pali Scriptures, that people were pretty healthy in those days - perhaps sometimes in a rather coarse sort of way, but they were healthy and they were positive. They weren't neurotic. There was quite a bit of fellow feeling around and good will. It didn't need to be insisted upon all that much. But certainly there was a lot of ignorance and confusion and misunderstanding and delusion, wrong views. Later on, of course, in the Mahayana, we do find compassion or the need for compassion, much more explicitly insisted upon, and that might be due to perhaps some deterioration in India itself, of a quite general nature. Some of the things that we insist upon ourselves would have been completely unnecessary to insist upon in the Buddha's day. What are the sort of things that we insist upon very strongly?

Sona: Positive emotion.

S: Positive emotion, yes, which suggests that we haven't got much of that sort of thing. But, getting away from that sort of field, even this idea of individuality - we stress it, or we think of spiritual development in terms of being an individual, just because there is so much in modern [511] life that crushes individuality. It can't expand, it can't grow, it can't develop. But that wasn't so much the case, it seems, in the Buddha's day. Once you'd got away from your own stuffy little village, you were free, you could expand. Even the king didn't bother you much, or at all, perhaps. But nowadays it is much more difficult to be free, much more difficult to be an individual. So we think about it more and stress it more.

Even this whole question of having time off: the whole idea of leisure becomes important; why? because work has become so necessary. It wasn't so necessary in the Buddha's day. At least you had the rainy season off, when you couldn't do any work in the fields. But we have to stress the idea of leisure just because work has become so demanding, so time-consuming and energy-consuming.

So, very often something isn't stressed because there is no need to stress it. It is stressed because there is a need to stress it. So if, say, in 5,000 years' time, people want to study our Movement and if they want to reconstruct the sort of situation we happen to be living in, they could do that just by examining and analysing the sort of things that we stress or regard as very important. The Buddha had to emphasize 'Don't take things on authority', 'Don't take things on trust', because there was a very strong authority, that of the brahmins. It is just like the Protestants; there is no sense in saying 'No popery' unless there is a pope. If there were no pope, no one would have said 'No popery'.

Sona: There is quite a lot of compassion shown just in the way the Buddha behaves.

S: That's true, yes. As I said, the Buddha's concern about Cunda (shows this).

Sona: I was just thinking of these sort of arhants whizzing off into Nirvana and leaving everyone else as it were stuck behind, but maybe I've got too literal a conception of Bodhisattvas.

S: Yes. And too literal a conception of arhants, too.

Devaraja: Can you - I think it is quite important, mainly from the point of view of the people who ask questions like that - like, 'Of course, you're going to whiz off to Nirvana and what about us stuck down here?' I just wonder what's the best way to tackle that sort of ...

S: Well, you just say, 'Who has whizzed off to Nirvana recently?' These are just theoretical questions. You could say: 'How many people have whizzed off to Nirvana recently? Let's do a little statistical analysis.' Say: 'We're all here, whether Bodhisattvas or not.'

Sona: I think the confusion seems to have come from when one thinks of the Bodhisattva vow that you will remain until all beings are saved. It is difficult to see how - you get the feeling that one can't really be a Buddha or an Enlightened person until you've been a Bodhisattva. And so you get this confusion.

S: I think there are different levels of meaning here. And I think one mustn't think of the Bodhisattva in too highly personalised terms, [512] because the Bodhisattva represents a sort of principle - you know, that principle which runs through the whole spiritual life, including the life of the arhant.

Sona: I often think, in fact, of the little section in the Diamond Sutra where the Buddha says to Subhuti about the Bodhisattva helping all beings - 'but, Subhuti, there are no beings to be helped!'

S: Yes. It's a bit like, say, having as it were a Bodhisattva of Wisdom and a Bodhisattva of Compassion. Then someone says, 'Ah, you said that Avalokitesvara is the Bodhisattva of Compassion and that Manjusri is the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, but how can they be Bodhisattvas if they've only got one? To be Bodhisattvas they ought to have (both).' It's that sort of literalism that gets you into difficulties.

But it is quite important that one doesn't have to as it were explain away too much or interpret too much.

Sona: Well, it occurred to me that perhaps it's good at first to take the Bodhisattva ideal quite literally, because to start off with you've got something concrete to try and develop this attitude yourself, and then ...

S: Well, quite literally as far as one's own practice is concerned; but not, perhaps, quite literally in a purely doctrinal sense. That is, not taking the words, or the way in which the doctrine or the Teaching is expressed, too literally or literalistically.

Sona: That's why I often think of the Diamond Sutra, to sort of balance out. Because if there is something you don't understand, it sort of completely counters the literalness.

S: You shouldn't be thinking too much of actually existent beings out there waiting to be

saved by you, or by some Bodhisattva or other. If it is said of the arhant that his state is inexpressible, how do you know what he is doing or not doing? You don't know. You don't know in what way he is operating or not operating. So if you say, 'Why doesn't he do this and why doesn't he do that?' it suggests you know exactly how he is operating, and you know exactly what he is or what he is like; but you don't.

Sona: It often says in the text - well, I've rather assumed this, actually - about the breaking up of the body as though there is no need to carry it on; but does it actually say that he definitely couldn't carry on if he didn't want to?

S: Well, the Theravada texts say that there is no necessity of carrying on. You're not impelled, there is no blind urge, any longer. The Mahayana goes a step further than that and says that Compassion remains inasmuch as Wisdom remains. And out of that compassion one could, if one so wished, voluntarily, as it were, come back. The Theravada never goes so far as actually to say that - not in those terms, anyway. I think that's that.

'VERSES OF UPLIFT' IS FINISHED

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira December 1998