

Tape 187: Intellect, Emotion and Will

Order Members, Mitras and Friends,

I think I need hardly say how happy I am to be here with you all on this occasion, not only this evening, but also earlier on in the afternoon when we had the dedication of the new shrine room of the new Manchester Buddhist Centre, and also the 'consecration' of this beautiful new image.

One of the reasons why I am so happy to be here with you today is that my association with the Manchester Buddhist Centre goes back quite a long way. I'm not quite sure exactly how far back it does go, but I think it's probably very nearly twenty years. I think that my first visit to the Manchester Buddhist Centre as such was to a fairly small terrace property somewhere in Manchester, I don't even remember where it was, with a rather untidy kitchen and lots of hi-fi equipment upstairs! I have very vivid memories of those visits and of course subsequently I visited the other premises of the Manchester Buddhist Centre and couldn't help noticing that they were getting bigger and bigger and better and better and even that the kitchens were getting tidier and tidier and even the hi-fi equipment didn't seem as prominent as it was in the earlier days! And of course today we find ourselves in the midst of a Centre which is bigger than ever and more beautiful than ever, in fact superlatively beautiful, and we've already heard to whom credit is due for that.

I must also say that I've always enjoyed my visits to Manchester as such, I mean, I know from time to time I've made little jokes about rainy Manchester, which my Mancunian friends have always taken in very good part though perhaps they did get a little tired of them in the end! But, yes, I always have enjoyed my visits to this city with its fine cultural facilities, especially its Art Gallery where I always used to at least try to go and pay my respects to the pre-Raphaelite paintings, if not to quite all the others.

So yes, I'm happy to be present on this occasion, and I'm enjoying this visit to Manchester too, this visit to this very new, bigger and better than ever, Manchester Centre. And yes, I'm supposed to be giving a talk or lecture.

I remember in the early days of the FWBO there used to be quite a discussion as to whether I should give talks or whether I should give lectures. People seemed to think there was quite an important difference or distinction. A lecture they thought of as something much more formal, and a talk as something more informal and many of our friends in those days used to think that a talk was much better than a lecture because informality was much better than formality. There was quite a discussion about that sort of thing. But regardless of whether my public spoken utterances can be described as lectures or as talks, I did give quite a lot of them, as many of you know, which was at least to have listened to quite a number of them on tape. In fact it's extraordinary how long-lived some of them are.

Only a few days ago I received a letter from an unknown correspondent who seems to be an orthodox Christian, and he'd just been listening to a talk I gave thirty years ago on Buddhism and the Bishop of Woolwich, and he was challenging my views on Christianity and on Buddhism and the Bishop of Woolwich. And he wrote, you know, raising various points and in particular he wanted to know why I could be so sure that there were no valid arguments for the existence of a personal creator god. So I thought, this is very interesting. How did this gentleman, who seems to have no connection with the FWBO, get hold of this particular talk, given thirty, yes more than thirty years ago, when I was still living at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara in North London? But anyway, that's by the way, it does go to show that these, well some at least of these talks might have survived on tape, and some of course have been edited and published in book form. Be that as it may. I've given so many talks in my time, given so many in India, of course. Perhaps it's a good thing that all the possibly thousands of talks I gave in India were never tape recorded because for the Spoken Word team would be growing grey over their labours! They're already busy enough.

But I mention this just as sort of propaedeutic to my making the point that if, after all these

years of giving lectures, after giving so many of them, perhaps thousands of them, you might not be surprised to hear that I've rather gone off giving lectures! It's like so many other things - you enjoy it very much at first, maybe for a few years, you enjoy doing it again and again, but after a while the novelty does begin to wear off, and I think I can say for me that giving lectures is no longer a novelty. Someone asked me not so very long ago whether I ever felt nervous before giving a lecture. I said, well, no. I said, even when I gave my first lecture, which was when I was twenty-one, I gave it in Singapore, no I didn't feel nervous beforehand. I don't know why, I mean, sometimes people do feel nervous it seems, but for one reason or another I've never felt nervous.

But certainly, yes, I've become a little tired of giving lectures. It's not that I think that giving lectures isn't a good thing, yes it's a perfectly good thing, it's a very legitimate and valuable activity and I'm very glad to hear that the new Manchester Buddhist Centre will very soon be the venue of well, a number of what I'm sure will be splendid lectures by Dharmacaris and Dharmacarinis alike. But I must add, well perhaps I should also just mention here, that, yes as I am sure you will see in due course, there are other Order Members who are able to give really good talks. I must admit that sometimes I think nowadays - well, just between ourselves - I think some Order Members give better talks than I give now. Maybe I was quite good in my prime, say twenty-five or thirty years ago, but I think now I'm not so good at giving lectures, frankly speaking. I don't think my present-day lectures are really up to the standard of those I gave a quarter of a century or half a century ago. So I think yes, it's just as well that you'll be listening to lectures by Subhuti and Nagabodhi and Kamalashila and Srimala and Sanghadevi, and all the other, you know, very capable and well-informed Order Members.

I recall in this connection the lecture - I think it was called a lecture - that Subhuti gave at the opening of the Nottingham Buddhist Centre. I listened to it very carefully because I may say I'm a bit of a connoisseur in lectures! I know a good lecture from a bad one, or a bad one from a good one, and Subhuti's lecture was very good indeed. In fact, I thought it was quite a classic. And of course I knew that I was going to be giving a lecture or a talk at the opening of the new Manchester Buddhist Centre but I couldn't help thinking, well you know, Subhuti's lecture is really a classic of its kind. It's so appropriate to the opening of a new Buddhist Centre, whether the Nottingham one or the Manchester one, it's a pity that they just couldn't play the tape of Subhuti's talk and just you know dispense with me! But I didn't venture to suggest that because I thought perhaps the idea might not be, you know, very well received! Even though I'm sure you all do think very highly of Subhuti's lectures, including that one which he gave in Nottingham.

But though nowadays I've gone off you know giving lectures, and may well not actually give any again, who knows, I'm quite happy to read papers. Now some of you may think that that's rather strange because to prepare a talk is relatively easy. I spent just a couple of hours preparing the present talk which means that well a lot of it isn't prepared at all - it's unprepared, what people like sometimes to call spontaneous. I don't think up the jokes beforehand! So people might think it's rather strange that I prefer to read papers because papers sometimes take weeks and weeks to write and they're really hard work, but nonetheless I do nowadays prefer to prepare and read papers rather than give talks or lectures because I feel that I can express myself more fully and accurately and pertinently and perhaps with less possibility of misunderstanding when I commit myself to writing and then read out.

But anyway I wouldn't have minded preparing a paper to read on this occasion, in fact I would have been very happy to do so, but I must admit I've not had time to do so. I won't go into the reasons why I wouldn't have had time to do so, except to mention that I have been very busy with all sorts of preparations for my forthcoming tour to which Arthapriya did allude, and perhaps a bit later on I shall have something to say about that tour, that forthcoming tour.

So all right, I'm not really very happy any longer giving talks or lectures, I haven't got a paper to read, so what shall I do? Well, I thought that what I would do, and this is the thought that occurred to me just a few days ago when I was making a few notes with this talk. I'd share with you just a little of my current thinking. Some of you know that I spend quite a bit of my time just thinking, I quite enjoy just thinking, I quite enjoy just reflecting, and I find that there's all sorts of things to think about and reflect upon, Dharmic things and non-Dharmic

things, personal things, literary things, artistic things, current affairs, even the current political situation, people - you know, friends, contacts in the Buddhist world, books that I read, books that I have read, experiences that I had perhaps twenty-five, thirty, forty years ago. I spend quite a lot of time reflecting on and thinking about all these things, especially things which are connected with or have some bearing on the FWBO and of course on the Dharma, which is the basis and foundation of the FWBO.

Some people - I suppose most of you - do know that I have written quite a few books as well as giving quite a few lectures and talks and know that I have conducted, led, quite a few seminars and have expressed quite a few thoughts, quite a few opinions, quite a few conclusions on all sorts of subjects. Some of you will be aware that Subhuti has tried to bring together all my thoughts on leading topics of general Dharmic interest in a book and to share their interconnection, but one must not thereby think that I've stopped thinking, or that my thinking perhaps isn't changing, much less still that I consider my thinking or my thought to be complete.

And this means that I don't really think that the FWBO is complete. Thirty years ago the FWBO was a very small seed. That seed has sprouted, it has put forth many, many shoots, it's sunk down very deep roots, but its growth is by no means complete. I myself have seen in the course of the last so many years developments which I did not altogether foresee. I didn't have a sort of detailed blueprint of what the FWBO was going to turn out to be like. There were just some leading ideas, just a general sense of direction, just a broad, general vision.

So yes, I'm still thinking, I'm still reflecting, still thinking about matters of deep concern to the FWBO in general and also considering the Dharma, trying to deepen my understanding and penetration of the Dharma itself

So yes, there's quite a bit of current thinking going on, and you won't be surprised to learn that some of that current thinking at least is in connection with our Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels. Incidentally, someone did make the point recently, and I think it's a point worth remembering, that some of us have got into the habit of speaking simply of Going For Refuge, or even My Going For Refuge, or Our Going For Refuge, without explicitly mentioning what it is that one goes for refuge to, which is of course the Three Jewels, to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. So I think that's a point worth paying attention to.

We don't just say, I'm a bit concerned about my going for refuge, or I'm not too sure about my going for refuge nowadays. Well, going for refuge to what? Make it more explicit, make it more concrete - it'll then become plainer and clearer.

So a certain amount of my current thinking is in connection with Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels. So who is it that Goes For Refuge? Well, we Go For Refuge, especially if we're Order Members. But take it a bit further than that. It's the individual that Goes For Refuge. There's no collective Going For Refuge. The group as such does not Go For Refuge, at least the group as such does not Go For Refuge effectively or really. So it's the individual who Goes For Refuge.

But then one might say the question arises, who is this individual that Goes For Refuge? What is this individual that Goes For Refuge like? I'm not concerned at this point with anything deeply metaphysical. I'm not going to raise the question of the anatma doctrine, or the question of relative and absolute truth, or anything of that sort. I'm speaking in quite ordinary and everyday terms. It's the individual who Goes For Refuge, so what's that individual like? What is that individual made up of? Very broadly speaking there's a nama, there's a rupa, there's a body, there's a mind, connected we know not how, that's a great mystery. But if we look at the mind, let us say, if we look at the individuality as such, look at the psyche if you like, we can distinguish three quite separate and distinct aspects. They're not altogether different, they're not really demarcated one from the other in any sort of hard and fast way, but we can distinguish them.

There's an intellectual aspect, an emotional aspect, and a volitional aspect, the aspect of will.

Because we think, we feel, we emote and we will, we connate. So I want just to try to relate these three aspects to our Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels. It would seem that they don't all come into play at once or come into play equally, and this is because we're not really integrated beings. In many ways we're quite divided beings.

So what happens? Let's look briefly at the way in which we come into contact with the Three Jewels, especially to begin with say the Buddha. First of all we may say we come to know about the Buddha, this is what usually happens. We hear about the Buddha, we read about the Buddha. We come to know the historical facts. We know that he was born in the borderlands between the present-day Nepal and the present-day India. We know that he was born into a patrician, even a princely family, and we know how he went forth from the household life when he was, according to most traditions, twenty-nine years of age. We know how he sat beneath the Bodhi Tree and how he gained Enlightenment, and how he taught his Dharma subsequently and gathered disciples, so we know these historical facts. Here it's our 'intellect', for want of a better term, that comes into play. Incidentally I wish that we didn't have to use this term, intellect. It's one of these terms that has been in - well, in recent centuries perhaps - very grossly devalued, but we don't seem to have any other term to replace it. But I use it so to speak within inverted commas. We have this, as it were, 'intellectual' knowledge about the Buddha, we know the historical facts.

But of course you can know the historical facts about the Buddha, about the Buddha's life, without being a Buddhist. There may be non-Buddhists, scholars, academics, who *know* the historical facts about the Buddha's life much better than you do. But there's no feeling. That's the difference. When you know simply *about* the Buddha as a historical personage, and you know simply the historical facts - or what we believe are the historical facts - about his career, it's simply your intellect which is coming into play.

But if you become sufficiently acquainted with those historical facts, especially if you dwell upon certain incidents, certain episodes, in the life of the Buddha, then in fact you start developing a feeling for the Buddha. Perhaps you come across that incident where the Buddha is making his rounds of the monks' dwellings, and he sees an old monk, just lying there sick and neglected by the other monks. And the Buddha calls upon Ananda, his faithful attendant and disciple, to help him lift that sick monk onto a bed and to wash him and care for him. And then the Buddha of course calls together the other monks, and asks them why they are not caring for their sick monk. And he says, "Monks, you have no father and no mother, we should care for one another."

So when one reads incidents like that, or when one reads for instance the story about the Buddha and Kisagotami, the woman who had lost her only child, and when one comes to know how tactfully and compassionately, but at the same time how profoundly and radically the Buddha dealt with her case, how he consoled her, consoled her in the highest possible way, then you're not just learning facts about the Buddha's life story, you begin to have some feeling for the Buddha, some feeling for the Buddha's compassion, some feeling for the Buddha's wisdom, some feeling for the Buddha's energy, his unremitting energy, as he preached the Dharma for so many years.

So then, as you start feeling in this way your emotions come into play. The Buddha is no longer just an object of your knowledge. He's also an object of your emotion. It's not just your intellect that is brought into play, but your feelings and your emotions and you can go on to contemplate the attributes of the Buddha quite systematically, to build up your feeling for him. You can also do the sevenfold puja, that has much the same effect. Your devotional feelings are increased and enhanced, and perhaps you can do, if you're an Order Member, a visualisation, etc. a visualisation say of Shakyamuni.

I say exercise, but again single inverted commas, because when you visualise say Shakyamuni or any other Buddha or Bodhisattva, it isn't just an exercise in a neutral sense, in an emotionally neutral sense. There must be some feeling for the person, the spiritual person, the transcendental person from your endeavouring to visualise.

So in this way as you develop more and more feeling for the Buddha you become as it were drawn towards the Buddha. You want to become more like the Buddha, and in this way will

comes into play. So how is it that will comes into play? Well will comes into play because it isn't an easy thing to become like the Buddha as you wish. You have to make an effort. So in this way intellect, emotion and will, each in turn, one by one, come into play and it's only when all come into play, when we know about the Buddha, when we feel for the Buddha and we have the will to become like the Buddha, that we are able effectively to Go For Refuge.

Now, just a few words about 'will' and willing. I suspect that the will has had rather a bad press in the FWBO. Well, I think in some quarters intellect has had rather a bad press, or at least one person is nodding vigorously. Emotions don't seem to have had a bad press. People think it's a very good thing to be into your feelings and all that sort of thing, one's got to be very 'vulnerable' these days of course! And sensitive! Especially if you're a man of course! So yes, intellect's had something of a bad press, emotions haven't, but will I think has had the worst press of all, within the FWBO. And the reason I think is that will and willing are very often confused with willfulness. And willfulness of course is just one of the things that a good Order Member or mitra or friend even must not be. You mustn't be willful. And very often if someone isn't getting on perhaps very well with their meditation, or they're having difficulties in personal relationships, well very often they're told, "My dear, I'm afraid you're being too willful! Don't be so willful! Don't try so hard! Relax! Give yourself an easy time!" Well sometimes it's necessary to relax and yes willfulness, real willfulness is not a virtue, it is a weakness, but strong and steady willing is quite a different thing from willfulness.

We mustn't forget that cetana, in the sense of will or conscious intention, plays in fact a crucial part in the Buddhist life. Cetana is equated with karma and it's no accident that I've always personally rendered the term 'Bodhicitta' not as the Thought of Enlightenment, but as Will to Enlightenment. No doubt Will to Enlightenment has certain disadvantages, but nearly so many disadvantages as when the term Bodhicitta is rendered as Thought of Enlightenment. Also we mustn't forget that according to tradition dhyanic states, states of superconsciousness, are in a sense states of willing, not willfulness, but willing, inasmuch as they represent a mental or psychical activity that has highly positive karmic consequences.

So the upshot of this brief discussion is that we should not allow ourselves to underestimate the importance of will in spiritual life. It's not enough to know about the Buddha, not enough to feel for the Buddha, to have devotion for the Buddha, even to dedicate ourselves to the Buddha, we have also to will to be like the Buddha, and we may say, there's no spiritual life without will. We might even say that spiritual life may be defined as the constant, the continuous, the unintermittent willing of the Good, with a capital G, in all circumstances and under all conditions.

Now I've spoken about knowing, feeling and willing in relation to the Buddha, but what about the Dharma and the Sangha? Well, the same principles hold good with regard to them also.

There's such a thing, we know very well, as intellectual or academic study of the Dharma, that is to say, a study of the Dharma that is without any feeling for the Dharma, much less still any willing to embody the Dharma in one's own life. And quite a number of people just remain on this level. And some of the people who remain on this level, perhaps with a very good intellectual or academic knowledge of the Dharma, of a sort, write books about it. So it's very important that we should be able to distinguish books which are merely informative, which are written just by academics about the Dharma, distinguish these from books which are written by people who don't just have knowledge of the Dharma, but also have feeling for the Dharma. Sometimes the difference is pretty obvious. In the old days, years ago, when people wrote books about Buddhism who were quite hostile to Buddhism, yes they had feelings about the Dharma but they were very negative feelings and those sometimes found very overt expression, you know, in their books.

So yes, we need to have an intellectual, even an academic knowledge of the Dharma, I certainly don't wish to depreciate that, but in addition to knowledge of the Dharma we must have a feeling for the Dharma and when we have that feeling for the Dharma, then there comes real interest in study, Dharma study, real enthusiasm for study.

And finally of course when the will comes into play we will want to will the Dharma in our

own lives, we will want to make it operative in our own lives, we will want to practise the precepts, we will want to meditate and so on.

Then what about the Sangha? This term Sangha is used nowadays rather loosely. I don't think that really matters. For instance I might get a letter from someone, say in Brighton, saying the Brighton sangha is much bigger than it was five years ago, well sangha here with a small 's' means all the people who are coming to the Brighton Centre, or who are in contact with the Brighton Centre. Or sometimes you hear references to the women's sangha, or even the mitra sangha, though these are extensions in the usage of the word I think they're not illegitimate, they do fulfil a certain purpose.

But if we look at the meaning of Sangha in the more traditional sense we see that very broadly speaking, in the broadest sense, there are really two Sanghas. There's the Arya Sangha, the Sangha of Aryas, and there's the Sangha of non-Aryas. The Aryas of course are those who have gained the transcendental path, the path leading directly to Nirvana whether they are occupying the lower or the higher stages of that transcendental path, they all make up the Arya Sangha, the Stream Entrants and so on, the great Bodhisattvas and so on. And then of course the non-Aryas are all those who, though they may be effectively Going For Refuge, have not yet reached the transcendental path. Their refuge, their Going For Refuge, is not yet Real. They make up the Sangha of the non-Aryas.

So in the same way as with regard to the Buddha and the Dharma, we can come to know about the members of the Arya Sangha, we can come to know simply about the details of the lives of say Milarepa and Hakuin and then we can develop a feeling for them, after coming to know about their lives, and then of course we can aspire to be like them, develop the will to be like them, just as in the case of the Buddha and the Dharma. And the same applies in principle to the figures of the great Bodhisattvas, in fact all the figures on the Refuge Tree. We can get to know about them, read the stories of their lives, then develop some feeling for them, and then, with the will coming into play, actively aspire to be like them. That's relatively straightforward.

But what about the Sangha of non-Aryas? What about that? For practical purposes, we may say the Sangha of non-Aryas consists of all those who are effectively Going For Refuge with whom we are in actual personal contact. And perhaps we could even say that it includes also those whose Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels is only provisional, in other words, all those who are actively involved in attending the same Buddhist Centre. In other words, we may say that the Sangha of non-Aryas consists, with of course a few exceptions that I might not know about, consists of all of you.

Now it's not enough just to know one another when you come to one and the same Centre. It's not enough just to know names of other people, just to know something about them. It's also important that one develops positive feelings for them, important that we should feel happy and glad that they're attending our Centre. Perhaps one should mention here that it's very important, well I've often wondered whether I might not have Fifteen Points for People Attending the new Manchester Buddhist Centre. Well if I did have, and these points or this particular point would apply to all FWBO Centres - one point would be, make newcomers feel welcome. I think people who come along regularly to any FWBO Centre and who are familiar with things there, I know a lot of people don't always appreciate, especially after they've been involved with the Centre for a few years, what it feels like to be a newcomer. You walk into a room, or perhaps to begin with you've had to pluck up your courage to come to this strange exotic, apparently oriental-looking place, a Buddhist Centre. So you pluck up your courage, you go along on your own, as you nervously enter, and there's a lot of people there, and they're all talking, talking to one another vigorously. And no-one takes any notice of you, no-one seems to see you. You can feel, you know, very isolated. I know this does occasionally happen, because when you go along to the Centre, perhaps you haven't seen certain of your friends for a long time, or perhaps you've got an important item of Council business to discuss so you seize hold of the - talk about that, and meanwhile perhaps the new person is standing there neglected.

So it's very important that you don't just acknowledge that he's there, or just see, well a new

person has come in, you have that knowledge, it's also important that you develop the feelings for the new person and you go out of your way if necessary to make them feel welcome and just to show them a few of the ropes.

And of course when you do come to know people who've been coming along to the Centre for quite a while like you, well it's not enough just to know about them, you need to enter into some sort of positive relationship of friendship with them, to develop some sort of care for them, a willingness to help them.

And I know, well certainly down in London and I'm sure here also, and in other FWBO Centres, this sort of feeling, this sort of spirit, has developed quite a lot in the course of the last two or three years. I think there's been almost a breakthrough in this respect in many of our Centres in the course of those two or three years. People do rally round and help one another in times of difficulty, or when they need help of some kind.

In other words it's important that we should not just know in a superficial sense other people coming along to the same Centre, but that we should develop some kind of feeling or relationship of kalyana mitrata with them. You all know I'm sure, at least in theory, maybe in many cases in practice, that kalyana mitrata is one of the great fundamental principles of the FWBO. It's something that we stress again and again. And of course I suppose we have to admit that at least in the early days we talked about it so much because there was actually so very little of it around, But things have changed and though we go on talking about it there is now quite a lot of it around.

And as I'm sure most if not all of you know we distinguish between vertical spiritual friendship, spiritual friendship with those who as far as one can see are more experienced in the spiritual life, even more advanced than oneself, and horizontal spiritual friendship, that is to say, friendship with those who are on approximately the same level as yourself

So it's not enough just to attend classes, good though that is. It's not enough to attend classes, but not make any friends. This used to be what happened in British Buddhist groups, and I believe still happens in some of them. I remember when I came back to England, to Britain thirty years ago, well it's thirty-two years ago now, this was one of the things that I noticed: people coming along to classes, to Buddhist classes or meditation classes or going on retreats, seemed to think it wasn't quite the done thing to talk to one another, to talk to the other people coming along. In fact, in some Buddhist circles, it was definitely discouraged. You were supposed to go along, listen to the teacher, take something in and go away with it, without if possible speaking to anybody. And well, people genuinely thought that this was the right and proper thing to do, that this was what the Buddhists would do, and that one shouldn't even talk to other people about Buddhism or the fact that one was a Buddhist.

I remember, there was a classic example which I sometimes refer to, is of a lady who came to see me one day and she said, "Bhante, you know, I've been a Buddhist for seventeen years, but not even my best friends know!" And she evidently felt that this was an achievement, that she'd managed to conceal the fact that she was a Buddhist even from her best friends for seventeen years.

So yes, we want each and every FWBO Centre to be a place where the theory and practice of kalyana mitrata is thoroughly understood. It should be a sort of oasis of friendliness in the midst of the desert of a world which very often unfortunately is a rather unfriendly place.

But nonetheless let me sound a little note of warning. Kalyana mitrata is an excellent thing, of course, it's one of the great foundations of the FWBO but there is a danger. Kalyana mitrata has a near enemy. I expect you're all familiar with this idea of the near enemy and the far enemy, so I won't go into it. One may say that at least so far as our public centres are concerned, the near enemy of kalyana mitrata is mere socialising. And sometimes people don't quite see the difference, or the kalyana mitrata merges insensibly into just socialising. But we have to remember that an FWBO Centre is not a social centre and we shouldn't treat it as such. I'll give you a little example, not from the FWBO but an experience of mine outside the FWBO so that no Centre will think that I might be getting at them.

I remember being on, I was going to say on retreat but no it wasn't on retreat, I was staying at a certain yoga centre. I won't tell you where it was, it wasn't in the United Kingdom. I was staying at a certain yoga centre, I was just there as a guest for a few days, and a certain other spiritual group was having a weekend retreat there at that time. I happened to be sitting inside my room and I was just sitting underneath the window, and outside the window there was a bench and during one of the breaks in the meditation two people who were on that retreat belonging to that other spiritual group sat and started talking. So they just talked, just for two or three minutes, about their meditation. One asked the other, "How's the meditation going?" And he said, "Not so bad," and they just talked about it for a couple of minutes, then they started talking about cars, and they talked about cars for at least half an hour. So that's the sort of thing I mean.

The context is spiritual. The context perhaps in our case is Buddhist. So let's keep it that way, be glad to see our friends, yes, enquire after their health, what they're doing, but make sure that the kalyana mitrata which we've here and experienced doesn't slide insensibly into a sort of idle socialising and idle chatter. Just remember the words of the Dedication Ceremony, "Here may no idle word be spoken," that we mean that quite literally. HERE MAY NO IDLE WORD BE SPOKEN. So it's something that we should remember and take and lay very much to heart.

In the East, in India, there's a very interesting custom which I - well, we follow it here. You leave your shoes outside the shrine room. You leave your shoes outside the temple. Now it's not just so as you don't carry any dirt in, it has a symbolic significance. Don't take into the shrine room, don't take into the Centre your worldly affairs, your worldly interests. Leave them behind with your shoes. So perhaps you should or could make it a sort of practice. Come in to the Centre - well, you don't leave your shoes just outside the door because, well you might not find them there afterwards! Not everyone in Manchester is Buddhist. You come upstairs, you leave your shoes outside the shrine room door and just sort of collect yourself Here I leave my shoes. Here I leave all thoughts about family, job. Here I leave my greed, hatred and delusion, and I just go into the shrine room with no other thought than the Dharma. This could be quite a useful little spiritual exercise. And if we behave in this spirit, only then will we be able to make real use of the Centre.

Well, so much for my rather rambling current thinking on Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels. But I also had some thoughts specifically about the Dharma, or perhaps I should say about Prajna, prajna being the 'subject' (single inverted comma), of which Dharma is the 'object' (single inverted comma). I'm sure you all know there are three kinds of Prajna, prajna based on hearing, prajna based on reflection and prajna based on meditation. And these are usually treated not only as successive, but as progressive. That the prajna which arises as a result of reflection is of a rather higher kind than that which arises in dependence upon simply hearing.

And in the same way the Prajna that arises on the basis of meditation is a rather loftier kind than that which arises merely on the basis of reflection. So this is the way in which they are usually treated, indeed the way in which they are usually experienced. But they can all be regarded as occupying the same level. And Prajna or Insight can arise equally in dependence on all three.

Take for instance the case, the classic case of Sariputra. Sariputra was originally the follower of a Brahmin teacher, but he became dissatisfied with this teacher's teaching - well, he and his friend Moggallana both became dissatisfied - and they started looking for another teacher. And Sariputra, we are told, happened to encounter Asvajit, one of the Buddha's first five disciples, and was impressed by his appearance, and inquired of him whose disciple he was and what his master taught. And then of course as we all know Asvajit recited or pronounced that famous verse, which is the epitome of the teaching of conditioned co-production, pratitya samutpada, and therefore of the whole of the Buddha's teaching on the more philosophical side, I won't repeat the verse now because everybody knows it anyway.

And Sariputra attained Insight, Prajna, Stream-Entry, just by hearing that verse. No reflection, no meditation, just on the basis of hearing he gained not Enlightenment but Stream-Entry.

Developed prajna, developed vipassana, developed insight. And many other of the Buddha's disciples had that experience, both during the Buddha's own lifetime and afterwards.

Of course we don't usually develop insight simply by hearing the Dharma. And of course in our case for 'hearing' one must read or understand 'reading'. We don't usually hear the Dharma, of course unless we're listening to a tape, usually we read the Dharma. But though we ourselves don't usually develop insight simply by hearing the Dharma, we mustn't overlook the fact that it's possible to do so.

So alright, we hear the Dharma, we read about the Dharma, we read all about the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, conditioned co-production, the seven bodhyangas and so on and so forth, sunyata, nirvana, we know all about all these things, but insight doesn't arise. For some reason or other it just doesn't happen. So what do we then have to do?

We have to reflect upon what we've heard, what we've read. It just hasn't sunk in deep enough, we weren't sufficiently receptive. If we had been, insight would have arisen when we heard, when we read. So we have to reflect. If we reflect long and hard enough, well, insight, prajna, may arise. Sometimes it does. But very often it doesn't. We hear and we hear, we read and we read, we reflect and we reflect, but still nothing seems to happen - nothing in the sense of insight or prajna arising or developing.

So we have to meditate. That's the reason why we meditate. If prajna arose when we heard or read or when we reflected, well we wouldn't really need to meditate except just for the sheer pleasure of it, because meditation, dhyana experiences are very pleasurable experiences and there's nothing wrong with pleasure, not of that sort, not skilful pleasure. It's the higher hedonism of Buddhism, we may say. Buddhism isn't puritanical in the sense of pleasure-denying. Buddhists can have as much pleasure as you like, enjoy yourself, revel in the dhyanas! Well, I was remembering expressions people used to use in the old days back in the sixties, and they used to talk about being blissed out! Well, something of that sort. So, Buddhism's not against that, but that's just by the way. But it's because, in consequence of or as a result of our study and our reflection that Insight hasn't arisen that we have to meditate. That's the real reason. And if again we meditate long and hard enough, eventually, yes, Insight, Prajna, does arise.

And of course we don't just meditate. The fact that we have found that study hasn't led, reading and hearing haven't led, to the arising of Insight, nor has reflection, and that we have had to have recourse to meditation, it doesn't mean that we give up those two other practices, no, we carry on studying, we carry on reading, we carry on hearing the Dharma, we also carry on reflecting on it, and with those two as the basis, we meditate. And usually in that threefold way eventually we manage to break through.

And that's the position I think with most of us. I think very few people do develop Insight just on the basis of hearing or reading, though that does sometimes happen, or just on the basis of reflection, though that does happen too. But even if you don't need meditation as a support for the development of Insight or Prajna, it's nonetheless a very pleasant experience.

So, I mentioned at the beginning that I hadn't had time to prepare a paper, to write a paper, and one of the reasons for that was the preparations I was making for my forthcoming tour. So let me conclude by saying just a few words about that tour - give a few facts, with or without feeling!

I shall be visiting FWBO Centres in the United States, in Canada, yes we have a Centre now in Canada with two Order Members, Australia and New Zealand. And I shan't be going fortunately on my own, I shall be accompanied for the whole of the journey by Paramatha, and also for part of the journey by Manjuvajra as well. And I won't be engaging in any public activities. At least that's what I think at present. I'll just be meeting Order Members, mitras and friends informally, seeing many of them I'm sure individually, and also doing a little sightseeing. And as far as I know I shall be away for six or seven months. And that's not without significance, because that will be the longest period for which I will have been away

from the United Kingdom since the FWBO was started:

Now you notice that I don't say going away from the FWBO, I say going away from the United Kingdom, And I say 'going away from the United Kingdom' and not 'going away from the FWBO' because in a sense I shall simply be going from one part of the FWBO to another part of the same FWBO and of course that will serve to remind me how wonderfully the FWBO has grown in the course of the last 28 years.

And I must admit that I sometimes ask myself how it has all happened. Sometimes it seems a bit of a miracle. Well, yes, quite a miracle. Because I remember that first Centre of ours which I referred to this afternoon when I was giving a few introductory remarks before the dedication ceremony. Some people may feel that I tend to harp on this a bit, well perhaps I do. Well anyway, let me harp on it!

I remember that first FWBO Centre which was called The Ti Ratana Buddhist Shrine and Meditation Centre, that's what it was, and it was of course situated in that now classical, historical, tiny basement, in Great Monmouth Street in central London, and it was, well it held at a tight squeeze about twenty-two people. And that's where we started. We just had these two classes, well, one class a week to begin with, and then we had two. And of course I remember one occasion where I just had one person for a particular class. I like to tell this story just to encourage perhaps Order Members who may get rather too easily discouraged when not too many people turn up to a class, well only fifteen or twenty say. Well I had that experience of just one person you know turning up, so I very vividly remember that first Centre, so tiny.

And well now we've got so many Centres and last but not least we've got the brand new Manchester Buddhist Centre! We've got so many communities. We've got right livelihood businesses. We've got arts centres, publications, we've got a whole new Buddhist movement and yes, as I said, now this great and splendid, new Manchester Buddhist.

And I must incidentally congratulate all of those who were involved in this creation, quite a large number of people seem to have been involved in the creation of this Centre - Order Members, mitras and friends, and it really is a magnificent achievement, and I really do rejoice in everybody's merits.

But as I said, I'll be away from the United Kingdom for six or seven months and of course one may say that during that time anything may happen. I'm well aware of the fact that I'm now very nearly seventy-one, which means that I'm well aware of the fact that even in the ordinary course of nature, not to speak of possible accidents, I may never come back to the United Kingdom and this may in fact be my last public appearance.

We must never forget that death may come to any one of us at any time. And of course the older you get the more the odds against your continuing to exist decrease. So this applies not just to me, it applies to each and every one of you.

So the moral, if you like, to use an unpopular term, the message, is that we should make the very best possible use of our time and we should practise the Dharma. Sometimes I think we don't realize how lucky we are. Sometimes I am amazed getting letters from people explaining to me, telling me how they made contact with the Dharma or with the FWBO. Sometimes it's as though they, well, the chances were all against them, It's just by the merest fluke that they happened to see a leaflet, or see a poster, or just read something in a book, or hear something from a friend. The merest fluke and that brought them into contact with the Dharma and with the FWBO so we are so fortunate that we now have access to the Dharma. My first real access to the Dharma apart from my own reading came during the war, when I joined the Buddhist Society and started attending its classes. And the Buddhist Society at that time, this was the early 1940s, was the only Buddhist organisation in Britain. And when I was going along to it during the war there were just about a dozen regular members and that was the Buddhist movement, the active Buddhist movement, apart from scholarly activities, in Britain. But now, quite apart from the FWBO, which has dozens of Centres in this country, so many other traditions are represented, the Dharma is very easily accessible to us. And perhaps

it's, well we might even say most accessible to those of us who go along to Centres like the new Manchester Buddhist Centre.

So let us make full use of the Dharma, let us take the Dharma seriously, let us try to practise it. I think we've more reason than ever to practise it nowadays because I think we are living in very difficult times, and I'm not a prophet, I don't have a crystal ball, and I may not see the next Christian century or the next Christian millenium, but I have an idea, I suspect that the next few decades in the world are not going to be very easy ones and that we shall need the Dharma more than ever, even though I think in some respects we are living in very difficult times.

Here in Manchester not so many weeks ago you had a very painful reminder of that fact not so very far from here. I'm referring of course to the Manchester bombing. I heard about it on the radio and shortly afterwards I phoned the Centre - no reply from the Centre. I phoned the community and yes, Mokshapriya was there, standing guard over the Manchester Buddhist Centre! It seems the area had been evacuated but he'd decided he'd stay and keep an eye on things! And I wanted - well, the purpose of my call was just to assure myself that no-one connected with the Centre had suffered any harm. He assured me that they hadn't but that the Centre had a few broken windows. Luckily the damage was no more than that so far as this place was concerned. I believe the broken windows have been since repaired. So yes, we're thankful that the damage was not worse and that work could continue and glad that the Centre now looks very beautiful.

Well despite what I've said, at least I hope that I will live to pay a few more visits to this new, soon to be perhaps not so new, Manchester Buddhist Centre, and I hope to be able to meet you all again, and meanwhile no doubt you'll be making good use of the Centre, you'll be meditating here, studying the Dharma here and enjoying spiritual friendship with one another here, and working in so many different ways here. And I'm sure if I am able to come again I shall find the Manchester Buddhist Center bigger and more beautiful than ever. So I really do congratulate all of you on what you've achieved so far. I hope that you may all put more and more into the Centre and get more and more out of the Centre. I hope and trust that the Manchester Buddhist Centre will continue to radiate the light of the Dharma more and more brightly and may that light touch and transform the lives of more and more people.